

# LEONIDAS.

A

P O E M.

—— Θανείν δ'οἷσιν ἀνάγκη  
Τί κε τις ἀνώνυμον γῆρας ἐν σκότῳ  
Καθήμενος ἔψοι μάταν, ἀπάντων  
Καλῶν ἄμμορος; PIND. OLYMP. OD. I.

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LEONIDAS

P. G. E. M.



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# THE P R E F A C E.

**T**O illustrate the following poem, to vindicate the subject from the censure of improbability, and to shew by the concurring evidence of the best historians, that such disinterested public virtue did once exist, I have thought, it would not be improper to prefix the subsequent narration.

WHILE Darius, the father of Xerxes, was yet on the throne of Persia, Cleomenes and Demaratus were kings in La-  
A 2 cedæmon,

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cedæmon, both descended from Hercules. Demaratus was unfortunately expos'd by an uncertain rumour, which render'd his legitimacy suspected, to the malice and treachery of his colleague, who had conceiv'd a personal resentment against him; for Cleomenes taking advantage of this report, persuaded the Spartans to examine into the birth of Demaratus, and refer the difficulty to the oracle of Delphi; and was assisted in his perfidious designs by a near relation of Demaratus, nam'd Leotychides, who aspir'd to succeed him in his dignity. Cleomenes found means to corrupt the priestess of Delphi, who declar'd Demaratus not legitimate. Thus by the base practices of his colleague Cleomenes, and his kinsman Leotychides, Demaratus was expell'd from his office of king in the commonwealth, after having frequently signaliz'd his valour

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v

lour in its service. He went into voluntary banishment, and retiring to Asia was there protected by Darius; while Leotychides succeeded to the regal authority in Sparta. Upon the death of Cleomenes Leonidas was made king, who rul'd in conjunction with this Leotychides, when Xerxes, the son of Darius, invaded Greece. The number of land and naval forces, wick accompanied that monarch, together with the servants, women, and other usual attendants on the army of an eastern prince, amounted to upwards of five millions, as reported by Herodotus, who wrote within a few years after the event, and publicly recited his history at the Olympic games. In this general assembly not only from Greece itself, but from every part of the world, wherever a colony of Grecians was planted, had he greatly exceeded the truth, he must certainly

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have been detected, and censur'd by some among so great a multitude, and such a voluntary falsehood must have entirely destroy'd that merit and authority, which have procur'd to Herodotus the veneration of all posterity, with the appellation of the father of history. On the first news of this attempt upon their liberty a convention was immediately held at the Isthmus of Corinth, compos'd of deputies from the several states of Greece, to consult on proper measures for the public safety. The Spartans also sent messengers to enquire of the oracle at Delphi into the event of the war, who return'd with an answer from the priestess of Apollo, that either a king descended from Hércules must die, or Lacedæmon would be entirely destroy'd. Leonidas immediately offer'd to sacrifice his life for the safety of Lacedæmon, and marching to Thermopylæ possess'd himself of  
that



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that important pass with three hundred of his countrymen; who with the forces of some other cities in the Peloponnesus, together with the Thebans, Thespians, and the troops of those states, which adjoin'd to Thermopylæ, compos'd an army of near eight thousand men.

XERXES was now advanc'd as far, as Thessalia; when hearing, that a small body of Grecians was assembled at Thermopylæ, with some Lacedæmonians at their head, and among the rest Leonidas, a descendant of Hercules, he dispatch'd a single horseman before to observe their numbers, and discover their designs. When this horseman approach'd, he could not take a view of the whole camp, which lay conceal'd behind a rampart formerly rais'd by the Phocians at the entrance of Thermopylæ; so that his whole attention was employ'd on those,



who were on guard before the wall, and who at that instant chanc'd to be the Lacedæmonians. Their manner and gestures greatly astonish'd the Persian; some were amusing themselves in gymnastic exercises; others were combing their hair; and all discover'd a total disregard of him, whom they suffer'd to depart without molestation, and report to Xerxes, what he had seen: which appearing to that prince quite ridiculous, he sent for Demaratus, who was with him in the camp, and requir'd him to explain this strange behaviour of his countrymen. Demaratus inform'd him, that it was a custom among the Spartans to comb down and adjust their hair, when they were determin'd to fight till the last extremity. Xerxes notwithstanding in the confidence of his power sent ambassadors to the Grecians to demand their arms, to bid them disperse, and become his friends and allies;

lies; which proposals being receiv'd with disdain, he commanded the Medes and Saces to seize on the Grecians, and bring them alive into his presence. These nations immediately attack'd the Grecians, and were soon repuls'd with great slaughter; fresh troops still succeeded, but with no better fortune than the first, being oppos'd to an enemy not only superiour in valour and resolution, but who had the advantage of discipline, and were furnish'd with better arms both offensive and defensive.

PLUTARCH in his Laconic apothegms reports, that the Persian king offer'd to invest Leonidas with the sovereignty of all Greece, provided he would join his arms to those of Persia. This offer was too considerable a condescension to have been made before a tryal of their force, and must therefore have been proposed

by Xerxes after such a series of ill success, as might probably have depress'd the insolence of his temper; and it may be easily suppos'd, that the virtue of Leonidas was proof against any temptations of that nature. Whether this be a fact, or not, thus much is certain, that Xerxes was reduc'd to extreme difficulties by this resolute defence of Thermopylæ; till he was extricated from his distress by a Malian nam'd Epialtes, who conducted twenty thousand of the Persian army into Greece through a pass, which lay higher up the country among the mountains of Oeta: whereas the passage at Thermopylæ was situated on the sea-shore between the end of those mountains and the Malian bay. The defence of the upper pass had been committed to a thousand Phocians, who upon the first sight of the enemy inconsiderately abandon'd their station, and put themselves in array

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ray upon a neighbouring eminence; but the Persians wisely avoided an engagement, and with the utmost expedition march'd to Thermopylæ. Leonidas no sooner receiv'd information, that the Barbarians had pass'd the mountains, but he commanded the allies to retreat, reserving the three hundred Spartans, and four hundred Thebans, whom, as they follow'd him with reluctance at first, he now compell'd to stay. But the Thebians, whose number amounted to seven hundred, would not be persuaded by Leonidas to forsake him. Their commander was Demophilus, and the most eminent amongst them for his valour was Dithyrambus. Among the Spartans the most conspicuous next to Leonidas was Dieneces, who being told, that the multitude of Persian arrows would obscure the sun, replied, the battle would then be in the shade. Two  
brothers



brothers named Alpheus and Maron are also recorded for their valour, and were Lacedæmonians. Megistias a priest, by birth an Acarnanian, refus'd to desert Leonidas, though intreated by him to consult his safety, and retire; but sent away his only son, and remain'd himself behind to die with the Lacedæmonians. Among the three hundred Spartans were two call'd Eurytus and Aristodemus, who being almost blind were dismiss'd by Leonidas. Of these Aristodemus return'd home; but Eurytus waited, till the Persians descended from the hills, and then commanding his slave to lead him among the combatants was slain with the rest of his countrymen.

HERODOTUS relates, that Leonidas drew up his men in the broadest part of Thermopylæ; where, being surrounded by the Persians, they fell with great  
num-



# THE PREFACE. XIII

numbers of their enemies : but Plutarch,  
 Diodorus Siculus, and others affirm, that  
 the Grecians attack'd the very camp of  
 Xerxes in the night. The action is thus  
 describ'd by Diodorus. " The Grecians  
 "having now rejected all thoughts of  
 "safety, preferring glory to life, unani-  
 "mously call'd on their general to lead  
 "them against the Persians, before they  
 "could be appris'd, that their friends  
 "had pass'd round the mountains. Leo-  
 "nidas embrac'd the occasion, which  
 "the ready zeal of his soldiers afforded,  
 "and commanded them forthwith to  
 "dine, as men, who were to sup in E-  
 "lysiun. Himself in consequence of  
 "this command took a repast, as the  
 "means to furnish strength for a long  
 "continuance, and to give perseverance  
 "in danger. After a short refreshment  
 "the Grecians were now prepar'd, and  
 "receiv'd orders to assail the enemies  
 "camp,

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“camp, to put all, they met, to the  
“sword, and force a passage to the royal  
“pavilion; when, form’d into one com-  
“pact body with Leonidas himself at  
“their head, they march’d against the  
“Persians, and enter’d their camp at  
“the dead of night. The Barbarians  
“wholly unprepar’d, and blindly con-  
“jecturing, that their friends were de-  
“feated, and themselves attack’d by the  
“united power of Greece, hurry toge-  
“ther from their tents with the utmost  
“disorder and consternation. Many  
“were slain by Leonidas and his party,  
“but much greater multitudes by their  
“own troops, to whom in the midst of  
“this blind confusion they were not dis-  
“tinguishable from enemies: for as night  
“took away the power of discerning  
“truly, and the tumult was spread uni-  
“versally over the camp, a prodigious  
“slaughter must naturally ensue. The  
“want

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"want of command, of a watch-word,  
 "and of confidence in themselves re-  
 "duc'd the Persians to such a state of  
 "confusion, that they destroy'd each  
 "other without distinction. Had Xerxes  
 "continued in the royal pavilion, the  
 "Grecians without difficulty might have  
 "brought the war to a speedy conclusion  
 "by his death; but he at the beginning  
 "of the tumult betook himself to flight  
 "with the utmost precipitation; when  
 "the Grecians rushing into the tent put  
 "to the sword most of those, who were  
 "left behind: then, while night lasted,  
 "they rang'd through the whole camp  
 "in diligent search of the tyrant. When  
 "morning appear'd, the Persians per-  
 "ceiving the true state of things held  
 "the inconsiderable number of their ene-  
 "mies in contempt; yet were so ter-  
 "rified at their valour, that they avoided  
 "a near engagement; but inclosing the  
"Gre-

“Grecians on every side shower’d their  
“darts and arrows upon them at a dis-  
“tance, and in the end destroy’d their  
“whole body. Such was the period of  
“their lives, who under the conduct of  
“Leonidas defended the pass of Ther-  
“mopylæ. Who can refrain from ad-  
“miring the virtue of these men, who  
“with one consent maintaining the post  
“allotted by their country chearfully  
“renounc’d their lives for the common  
“safety of Greece, and esteem’d a glo-  
“rious death more eligible than to live  
“with dishonour? Nor is the conster-  
“nation of the Persians incredible. Who  
“among those Barbarians could have  
“conjectur’d such an event? Who could  
“have expected, that five hundred men  
“would have dared to attack a million?  
“Wherefore shall not all posterity from  
“that day reflect on the virtue of these  
“men as the object of imitation, who,  
“tho’



## THE PREFACE. XVII

“tho’ the loss of their lives was the necessary consequence of their undertaking;  
“were yet unconquer’d in their spirit;  
“and among all the great names deliver’d down to remembrance are the  
“only heroes, who obtain’d more glory  
“in their fall, than others from the  
“brightest victories? With justice may  
“they be deem’d the preservers of the  
“Grecian liberty, even preferably to  
“those, who were conquerors in the  
“battles fought afterwards with Xerxes;  
“for the memory of their valour, who  
“fell at Thermopylæ, for ever dejected  
“the Barbarians, while the Greeks were  
“fir’d with emulation to equal such a  
“pitch of magnanimity. Upon the  
“whole there never were any before  
“these, who attain’d to immortality  
“through the meer excess of virtue;  
“whence the praise of their fortitude  
“has not been recorded by historians  
“only,



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“only, but has been celebrated by numbers of poets, among others by Simonides the lyric.”

PAUSANIAS in his *Laconics* considers the defence of Thermopylæ, as an action superior to any atchiev'd by their cotemporaries, and to all the exploits of preceding ages. “Never (says he) had Xerxes beheld Greece, or laid in ashes the city of Athens, had not his forces under Hydarnes been conducted thro' a path over Oeta, and by that means incompassing the Greeks overcome and slain Leonidas.” Nor is it improbable, that Leonidas should have maintain'd his post in so narrow a pass, till the whole army of Xerxes had perish'd by famine. At the same time the Persian navy had been miserably shatter'd by a storm, and worsted in an engagement with the Athenians at Artemisium. To

To conclude, the fall of Leonidas and his brave companions, so meritorious to their country, and so glorious to themselves, has obtain'd such an high degree of veneration and applause from past ages, that few among the antient compilers of history have been silent on this amazing instance of magnanimity and zeal for liberty; and many are the epigrams and inscriptions now extant, some on the whole body, others on particulars, who died at Thermopylæ, still preserving their memory in every nation conversant with learning, and at this distance of time still rendring their virtue the object of admiration and praise.

I SHALL now detain the reader no longer, than to take this public occasion of expressing my sincere regard for the LORD VISCOUNT COBHAM, and the sense of my obligations for the early honour

nour of his friendship. To him I inscribe the following poem; and herein might I be justified, independent of all personal motives, from his Lordship's public conduct so highly distinguish'd by his disinterested zeal, and unshaken fidelity to his country, not less in civil life than in the field: and to whom a poem, founded on a character eminent for military glory, and love of liberty, is due from the nature of the subject.

R. GLOVER.

LEONIDAS.

A

P O E M.

LEONIDAS



M.



# LEONIDAS.

## BOOK I.

### The Argument.

*Xerxes, king of Persia, having drawn together the whole force of his empire, and pass'd over the Hellespont into Thrace with a design to conquer Greece; the deputies from the several states of that country, who had some time before assembled themselves at the Isthmus of Corinth to deliberate on proper measures for resisting the invader, were no sooner apprised of his march into Thrace, than they determin'd without further delay to dispute his passage at the straits of Thermopylæ, the most accessible part of Greece on the side of Thrace and Thessaly. Alpheus, one of the deputies from Sparta, repairs to that city, and communicates this resolution to his countrymen; who chanced that day to be assembled in expectation of receiving an answer from Apollo, to whom they had*

*sent a messenger to consult about the event of the war. Leotychides, one of their two kings, counsels the people to advance no further, than the Isthmus of Corinth, which separates the Peloponnesus, where Lacedæmon was situated, from the rest of Greece; but Leonidas, the other king, dissuades them from it. Agis, the messenger, who had been deputed to Delphi, and brother to the queen of Leonidas, returns with the oracle; which denounces ruin to the Lacedæmonians, unless one of their kings lays down his life for the publick. Leonidas offers himself for the victim. Three hundred Spartans are chosen to accompany him to Thermopylæ, and Alpheus returns to the Isthmus. Leonidas, after an interview with his queen, departs from Lacedæmon. At the end of six days he encamps near the Isthmus, when he is join'd by Alpheus, who describes the auxiliaries, that wait at the Isthmus, those, who are already possess'd of Thermopylæ, as also the pass itself; and concludes with a relation of the captivity of his brother Polydorus in Persia.*

**R**EHEARSE, O Muse, the deeds and glorious death

Of that fam'd Spartan, who withstood the pow'r  
Of Xerxes near Thermopylæ, and fell

To

Book I.      L E O N I D A S.

3

To save his country. When from Asia's coast  
 With half the nations of the peopled globe      5  
 The Persian king the Hellespont had pass'd,  
 And now in Thrace his boundless camp was spread;  
 Soon to the Isthmus, where th'assembled chiefs  
 Of Greece in anxious council long had sat,  
 How best their menac'd liberties to guard,      10  
 The dreadful tidings reach'd. The near approach  
 Of Asia's lord determines their resolves.  
 These they convey to all the Grecian states.  
 Back to Eurotas' shores, where Sparta rose,  
 Laconian Alpheus speeds: in council there      15  
 He finds the Spartan people with their kings;  
 Their kings, who boast an origin divine,  
 From Hercules descended. They the sons  
 Of Lacedæmon had conven'd to learn  
 The sacred mandates of th' immortal gods,  
 That morn expected from the Delphian dome;  
 But in their presence Alpheus first appear'd,  
 And thus address'd them. For immediate war  
 Prepare, O Spartans. Xerxes' num'rous pow'rs  
 Already fill the trembling bounds of Trace.      25

The Isthmian council hath decreed to guard  
 The strait and rocky entrance into Greece,  
 Thermopylæ; where ev'n a slender force  
 May stem the torrent of unnumber'd foes.

He said, when Leotychides, who shar'd 30  
 The rule with great Leonidas, bespake  
 The Spartans thus. My countrymen, give ear.  
 Why from her bosom should Laconia send  
 Her valiant sons to wage a distant war  
 For others' safety; why exhaust her strength 35  
 And thin her numbers in defence of those,  
 Who far remote from Lacedæmon dwell  
 Beyond the Isthmus? there the Gods have plac'd  
 Our native ramparts, there our empire's bound;  
 And there alone our country claims our swords. 40

He ceas'd. The people with assenting shouts  
 Replied, when thus Leonidas began.

O most ungen'rous counsel! most unjust,  
 And base desertion of the Grecian weal!

What!

Book I.      L E O N I D A S.

5

What! shall th'Athenians, whose assiduous fleets 45

Undaunted watch th'innumerable foes,

Where'er they menace our affrighted shores,

And trust th'impending dangers of the field

To Sparta's well-known valour; shall they hear,

That we, disowning thus the gen'ral cause, 50

Maintain the Isthmus only, and expose

The rest of Greece, ev'n Athens, while she guards

Our naked coasts, to all the waste of war,

Her walls to ruin, and her fields to flames,

Her sons, her matrons, and her hoary fires 55

To violation, servitude, and shame?

O should they hear such counsels guide our state,

Would they not court the first propitious gale

To waft them far from such perfidious friends,

And raise new seats in other climes remote, 60

Safe from insulting foes, and false allies?

Then should we soon behold the proud array

Of Xerxes' navy with their hostile beaks

Affront our shores, and deluge all our fields

With inexhausted numbers. Half the Greeks, 65

By us betray'd to bondage, would support



The Persian king, and lift th' avengin spear  
For our destruction. But, my friends, reject  
Such mean and dang'rous counsels, which will blast  
Your long establis'h'd glories, and assist 70  
The proud invader. O eternal king  
Of gods and mortals, elevate our minds!  
Each low and partial passion thence dispel!  
Till this great truth in ev'ry heart be known,  
That none, but those, who aid the public cause, 75  
Can shield their countries, or themselves from chains.

He said, by shame suppress'd each clam'rous voice  
Was lost in silence; till a gen'ral shout  
Proclaim'd th' approach of Agis from the fane,  
Where, taught by Phœbus on the Delphic hill, 80  
The Pythian maid his oracles reveal'd.

He came; but discontent and grief o'ercaft  
His anxious brow. Reluctant he advanc'd,  
And now prepar'd to speak. Th' impatient throng  
Was gather'd round him; motionless they stood 95  
With expectation; not a whisper told  
The silent fear, but all on Agis gaze;

And

And still as death attend the solemn tale.  
 As o'r the western waves, when ev'ry storm  
 Is hush'd within its cavern, and a breeze 90  
 Soft-breathing lightly with its wings along  
 The slacken'd cordage glides, the sailor's ear  
 Perceives no sound throughout the vast expanse;  
 None, but the murmurs of the sliding prow,  
 Which slowly parts the smooth and yielding main: 95  
 So through the wide and listning croud no sound,  
 No voice, but thine, O Agis, broke the air,  
 Declaring thus the oracle divine.

I WENT to Delphi; I enquir'd what fate  
 Was doom'd to Sparta from th'impending war; 100  
 When thus th' all-seeing deity replied.  
 " Inhabitants of Sparta, Persia's arms  
 " Shall lay your proud and ancient seat in dust;  
 " Unless a king from Hercules deriv'd  
 " Cause Lacedæmon for his death to mourn., 105

As, when the hand of Perseus had disclos'd  
 The snakes of dire Medusa; all, who view'd

The Gorgon features, were congeal'd to stone,  
With ghastly eye-balls on the hero bent,  
And horror living in their marble form; 110  
Thus with amazement rooted, where they stood,  
And froze with speechless terrour, on their kings  
The Spartans gaz'd: but soon their anxious looks  
All on the great Leonidas unite,  
Long known his country's refuge. He alone 115  
Remains unshaken. Rising he displays  
His godlike presence. Dignity and grace  
Adorn his frame, and manly beauty join'd  
With strength Herculean. On his aspect shines  
Sublimest virtue, and desire of fame, 120  
Where justice gives the laurel; in his eye  
The inextinguishable spark, which fires  
The souls of patriots: while his brow supports  
Undaunted valour, and contempt of death.  
Serene he rose, and thus address'd the throng. 125

Why this astonishment on ev'ry face,  
Ye men of Sparta? Does the name of death  
Create this fear and wonder? O my friends!

Why

Why do we labour through the arduous paths,  
Which lead to virtue? Fruitless were the toil, 130  
Above the reach of human feet were plac'd  
The distant summit, if the fear of death  
Could intercept our passage. But in vain  
His blackest frowns and terrors he assumes  
To shake the firmness of the mind, which knows 135  
That wanting virtue life is pain and woe,  
That wanting liberty ev'n virtue mourns,  
And looks around for happiness in vain.  
Then speak, O Sparta, and demand my life;  
My heart exulting answers to thy call, 140  
And smiles on glorious fate. To live with fame  
The Gods allow to many; but to die  
With equal lustre, is a blessing, Heav'n  
Selects from all the choicest boons of fate,  
And with a sparing hand on few bestows. 145

He said. New wonder fix'd the gazing throng.  
In silence Joy and Admiration sat  
Suspending praise. At length with high acclaim  
The arch of heav'n refounded, when amid  
Th' assembly stood Dienece, and spake. 150

So from Thermopylae may Sparta's shouts  
Affright the ear of Asia! Haste, my friends,  
To guard the gates of Greece, which open stand  
To Tyranny and Rapine. They with dread  
Will shrink before your standards, and again 155  
In servile Persia seek their native seats.  
Your wives, your sons, your parents, gen'ral Greece  
Forbid delay; and equal to the cause  
A chief behold: can Spartans ask for more? 159

He ceas'd; when Alpheus thus. It well becomes  
The Spartans held the chiefs of Greece, and fam'd  
For dauntless courage, and unyielding hearts,  
Which neither want, nor pain, nor death can bend,  
To lead the rest to battle. Then with speed  
From all your number form a chosen band, 165  
While I returning will my seat resume  
Among the Isthmian council, and declare  
Your instant march. Our brave allies, I deem,  
Now on the Isthmus wait the Spartan king;  
All but the Locrian and Bæotian force, 170  
With Phocis' youth, appointed to secure

Ther-



Book I.      L E O N I D A S.      11

Thermopylæ. This said, not long he paus'd,  
But with unwearied steps his course renews.

Now from th' assembly with majestic steps  
Forth moves their godlike king, with conscious  
worth 175

His gen'rous bosom glowing; like his fire,  
Th' invincible Alcides, when he trod  
With ardent speed to face in horrid war  
The triple form of Geryon, or against  
The bulk of huge Antæus match his strength. 180

SAY, Muse, who next present their dauntless breasts  
To meet all danger in their country's cause?  
Dieneces advances sages, and brave,  
And skill'd along the martial field to range  
The order'd ranks of battle; Maron next, 185  
To Alpheus dear, his brother, and his friend.  
Then rose Megistias with his blooming heir,  
Joy of his age, and Menalippus call'd;  
Megistias, wife and venerable feer,  
Whose penetrating mind, as fame records, 190  
Could

Could from the entrails of the victim slain  
Before the altar, and the mystic flight  
Of birds foresee the dark events of time.  
Though sprung a stranger on the distant shore  
Of Acarnania, for his worth receiv'd, 195  
And hospitably cherish'd, he the wreath  
Pontific bore amid the Spartan camp;  
Serene in danger, nor his sacred arm  
From warlike toils secluding, nor unskill'd  
To wield the sword, or poise the weighty spear. 200  
Him Agis follow'd, brother to the queen  
Of great Leonidas; his friend, in war  
His tried companion. Graceful were his steps,  
And gentle his demeanour. Still his soul  
Preserv'd its rigid virtue, though refin'd 205  
With arts unknown to Lacedæmon's race.  
High was his office. He, when Sparta's weal  
Their aid and counsel from the gods requir'd,  
Was sent the sacred messenger to learn  
Their mystic will in oracles declar'd 210  
From rocky Delphi, and Dodona's shade,  
Of sea-incircled Delos, or the cell

Of dark Trophonius round Bœotia known.

Three hundred more compleat th'intrepid band.

BUT to his home Leonidas retir'd.      215

There calm in secret thought he thus explor'd

His mighty soul, while nature to his breast

A short-liv'd terrour call'd. — What sudden grief,

What cold reluctance thus unmans my heart,

And whispers, that I fear? — Can death dismay 220

Leonidas, so often seen and scorn'd,

When clad most dreadful in the battle's front? —

Or to relinquish life in all its pride,

With all my honours blooming round my head,

Repines my soul? or rather to forsake, 222

Eternally forsake my weeping wife,

My infant offspring, and my faithful friends? —

Leonidas awake! Shall these withstand

The public safety? Lo! thy country calls. —

O sacred voice, I hear thee! At that sound 230

Returning virtue brightens in my heart;

Fear vanishes before her. Death, receive

My unreluctant hand, and lead me on.

Thou too, O Fame, attendant on my fall,

With

With wings unwearied shalt protect my tomb, 235  
Nor Time himself shall violate my praise.

THE hero thus confirm'd his virtuous soul,  
When Agis enter'd. If till now my tongue  
(He thus began) O brother, has delay'd  
To pay its grateful off'ring of the praise, 240  
Thy merit claims, and only fill'd the cries  
Of general applause, forgive thy friend;  
Since her distresses, hers, whom most you love,  
Detain'd me from thee. O unequall'd man!  
Though Lacedæmon call thy first regard, 245  
Forget not her, who now for thee laments  
In sorrows, which fraternal love in vain  
Hath strove to sooth. Leonidas embrac'd  
His gen'rous friend, and thus replied. Most dear  
And best of men! conceive not, but my heart 250  
Must still remember her, from whom my life  
Its largest share of happiness derives.  
Can I, who yield my breath, lest others mourn,  
Lest thousands should be wretched; when she pines,  
More lov'd than any, though less dear than all, 255

Can

Can I neglect her griefs! In future days  
If thou with grateful memory record  
My name and fate, O Sparta, pass not this  
Unheeded by; the life, I gave for thee,  
Knew not a painful hour to tire my soul, 260  
Nor were they common joys, I left behind.

So spake the patriot, and his heart o'erflow'd  
With fondest passion; then in eager haste  
The faithful partner of his bed he sought.  
Amid her weeping children sat the queen, 265  
Immoveable and mute; her swimming eyes  
Fix'd on the earth. Her arms were folded o'er  
Her lab'ring bosom blotted with her tears.  
As, when a dusky mist involves the sky,  
The moon through all the dreary vapours spreads  
The radiant vesture of its silver light      271  
O'er the dull face of nature; so her charms  
Divinely graceful shone upon her grief,  
Bright'ning the cloud of woe. The chief approach'd.  
Soon as in gentlest phrase his well-known voice  
Her drooping mind awaken'd, for a time 276



Its cares were hush'd: she lifts her languid head,  
And thus gives utterance to her tender thoughts.

O THOU, whose presence is my only joy,  
If thus, Leonidas, thy looks and voice 280  
Can dissipate at once the sharpest pangs,  
How greatly am I wretched; who no more  
Must hear that voice, which lulls my anguish thus,  
Nor see that face, which makes affliction smile!

THIS said, returning grief her breast invades. 285  
Her orphan children, her devoted lord  
Pale, bleeding, breathless on the field of death,  
Her ever-during solitude of woe,  
All rise in mingled horror to her sight,  
When thus in bitterest agony she spoke. 290

O WHITHER art thou going from my arms!  
Shall I no more behold thee! Oh! no more  
In conquest clad, and wrapt in glorious dust  
Wilt thou return to greet thy native soil,  
And make thy dwelling joyful! Ah! too brave,

Why

Book I.      L E O N I D A S.      17

Why wouldst thou hasten to the dreary gates      296

Of death, uncall'd? Another might have fall'n,

Like thee a victim of Alcides' race,

Less dear to all, and Sparta been secure.

Now ev'ry eye with mine is drown'd in tears,      300

All with these babes lament their father lost.

But oh! how heavy is our lot of pain!

Our sighs must last, when ev'ry other breast

Exults with transport, and the public joy

Will but increase our anguish. Yet unmov'd,      305

Thou didst not heed our sorrows, didst not seek

A moment's pause, to teach us how to bear

Thy endless absence, or like thee to die.

UNUTTERABLE sorrow here confin'd

Her voice. These words Leonidas return'd.      310

I SEE, I feel thy anguish, nor my soul

Has ever known the prevalence of love,

E'er prov'd a father's fondness, as this hour;

Nor, when most ardent to assert my fame,

Was once my heart insensible to thee.      315

How had it stain'd the honours of my name  
To hesitate a moment, and suspend  
My country's fate, till shameful life prefer'd  
By my inglorious colleague left no choice,  
But what in me were infamy to shun, 320  
Not virtue to accept? Then deem no more,  
That of thy love regardless, or thy tears,  
I haste uncall'd to death. The voice of Fate,  
The gods, my fame, my country bid me bleed. 324  
—Oh! thou dear mourner! wherefore streams afresh  
That flood of woe? Why heaves with sighs renew'd  
That tender breast? Leonidas must fall.  
Alas! far heavier misery impends  
O'er thee and these, if soften'd by thy tears  
I shamefully refuse to yield that breath, 330  
Which justice, glory, liberty, and heav'n  
Claim for my country, for my sons, and thee.  
Think on my long unalter'd love. Reflect  
On my paternal fondness. Has my heart  
E'er known a pause of love, or pious care? 335  
Now shall that care, that tenderness be prov'd  
Most warm and faithful. When thy husband dies

Book I.      L E O N I D A S.      19

For Lacedæmon's safety, thou wilt share,  
Thou and thy children, the diffusive good.  
Should I, thus singled from the rest of men,      340  
Alone intrusted by th'immortal Gods  
With pow'r to save a people, should my soul  
Desert that sacred cause, thee too I yield  
To sorrow, and to shame; for thou must weep  
With Lacedæmon, must with her sustain      345  
Thy painful portion of oppression's weight.  
Thy sons behold now worthy of their names,  
And Spartan birth. Their growing bloom must pine  
In shame and bondage, and their youthful hearts  
Beat at the sound of liberty no more.      350  
On their own virtue, and their father's fame,  
When he the Spartan freedom hath confirm'd,  
Before the world illustrious shall they rise,  
Their country's bulwark, and their mother's joy.

HERE paus'd the patriot. With religious awe      355  
Grief heard the voice of Virtue. No complaint  
The solemn silence broke. Tears ceas'd to flow:  
Ceas'd for a moment; soon again to stream.

For now in arms before the palace rang'd  
His brave companions of the war demand 360  
Their leader's presence; then her griefs renew'd,  
Too great for utterance, intercept her sighs,  
And freeze each accent on her faltering tongue.  
In speechless anguish on the hero's breast  
She sinks. On ev'ry side his children press, 365  
Hang on his knees, and kiss his honour'd hand.  
His soul no longer struggles to confine  
Its strong compunction. Down the hero's cheek,  
Down flows the manly sorrow. Great in woe  
Amid his children, who inclose him round, 370  
He stands indulging tenderness and love  
In graceful tears; when thus with lifted eyes  
Address'd to heav'n: Thou ever-living pow'r,  
Look down propitious, fire of gods and men!  
And to this faithful woman, whose desert 375  
May claim thy favour, grant the hours of peace.  
And thou, my great forefather, son of Jove,  
O Hercules, neglect not these thy race!  
But since that spirit, I from thee derive,  
Now bears me from them to resistless fate; 380  
Do



Do thou support their virtue! be they taught  
Like thee with glorious labour life to grace,  
And from their father let them learn to die!

So saying, forth he issues, and assumes  
Before the band his station of command. 385  
They now proceed. So mov'd the host of heav'n  
Down from Olympus in majestic march,  
On Jove attendant to the flaming plains  
Of Phlegra, there to face the giant sons  
Of Earth and Titan: he before them tow'r'd. 390  
Thus through the streets of Lacedæmon pass'd  
Leonidas. Before his footsteps bow  
The multitude exulting. On he treads  
Rever'd and honour'd. Their inraptur'd fight  
Pursues his graceful stature, and their tongues 395  
Extol and hail him as their guardian god.  
Firm in his nervous hand he grasps his spear.  
Down from his shoulders to his ankles hangs  
The massy shield, and o'er his burnish'd helm  
The purple plumage nods. Harmonious youths, 400  
Around whose brows entwining laurels play'd,

In lofty-sounding strains his praise record;  
While snowy-finger'd virgins all the ways  
With od'rous garlands strew'd. His bosom now  
Was all possess'd with glory, which dispell'd 405  
Whate'er of grief remain'd, or fond regret  
For those he left behind. The rev'rend train  
Of Lacedæmon's senate now approach'd  
To give their solemn, last farewell, and grace  
Their hero's parting steps. Around him flow'd 410  
In civil pomp their venerable robes  
Mix'd with the blaze of arms. The radiant troop  
Of warriors press'd behind him. Maron here,  
With Menalippus warm in flow'ry prime,  
And Agis there with manly grace advanc'd, 415  
Dieneces, and Acarnania's seer,  
Megistias sage. The Spartan dames ascend  
The loftiest domes, and thronging o'er the roofs  
Gaze on their sons and husbands, as they march.  
So parted Argo from th' Iolchian strand, 420  
And plough'd the foaming surge. Theſſalia's nymphs  
Their hills forsaking, and their hallow'd groves,  
Rang'd on the cliffs, which overshade the deep,  
Still

Still on the distant vessel fix'd their sight;  
 Where Greece her chosen heroes had embark'd  
 To seek the dangers of the Cholchian shore. 426

SWIFT on his course Leonidas proceeded,  
 Soon is Eurotas pass'd and Lerna's banks,  
 Where his unconquer'd ancestor subdu'd  
 The many-headed Hydra, and with fame 430  
 Immortaliz'd the lake. Th'unwearied hands  
 Next through the pines of Mænalus he led,  
 And down Parthenius urg'd the rapid toil.  
 Six days incessant thus the Spartans march, 434  
 When now they hear the hoarse-resounding tide  
 Beat on the Isthmus. Here their tents they spread.  
 Below the wide horizon then the sun  
 Had sunk his beamy head. The queen of night  
 Glean'd from the center of th'ethereal vault,  
 And o'er the dusky robe of darkness shed 440  
 Her silver light. Leonidas detains  
 Dieneces and Agis. Open stands  
 The tall pavilion, and admits the moon.  
 As here they sat conversing, from the hill,

Which rose before them, one of noble port 445  
Appears with speed descending. Lightly down  
The slope he treads, and calls aloud. They heard,  
And knew the voice of Alpheus. From their seats  
They rose, and thus Leonidas began.

O THOU, whom heav'n with swiftneſs hath endu'd  
To match the ardour of thy daring ſoul, 451  
What calls thee from the Iſthmus? Do the Greeks  
Neglect to arm, nor face the public foe?

I COME to meet thee (Alpheus thus return'd)  
A meſſenger, who gladſome tidings bears. 455  
Trough Greece the voice of liberty is heard,  
And all unfold their banners in her cauſe;  
The Thebans only with reluctant hands.  
Arcadia's ſons with morning ſhalt thou join,  
Who on the Iſthmus wait thy great command. 460  
With Diophantus Mantinea ſends  
Five hundred ſpears; nor leſs from Tegea's walls  
With Hegelaſter move. A thouſand more,  
Who in Orchomenus reſide, who range  
Along



Book I.      L E O N I D A S.      25

Along Parrhasius, and Cyllene's brow,      465

Or near the foot of Erymanthus dwell,

Or on Alphéus' banks, with various chiefs,

Attend thy call; but most is Clonius fam'd

Of stature huge: unshaken as a rock,

His giant bulk the line of war sustains.      470

Four hundred warriors brave Alcmaeon draws

From stately Corinth's tow'rs. Two hundred march

From Phlius, whom Eupalamus commands.

An equal number of Mycenæ's race

Aristobulus heads. Through fear alone      475

Of thee, and threatening Greece the Thebans arm,

To these inglorious Greeks my self repair'd

Their dying sense of honour to recall.

A few corrupted by the Persian gold,

Unjust dominion have usarp'd in Thebes.      480

These in each bosom quell the gen'rous flame

Of liberty. The eloquent they bribe;

With specious tales the multitude they cheat;

And prostitute the name of public good

To veil oppression. Others are immers'd      485

In all the sloth of riches, and unmov'd



In shameful ease behold their country fall.

I first implor'd their senate's instant aid,

But they with artful wiles demanding time

For consultation, I address'd them thus. 490

The shortest moment may suffice to know,

If to die free be better than to serve;

But if, deluding Greece by vain delays,

You mean to shew your friendship to the foe,

You cannot then deliberate too long, 495

How to withstand her swift-avenging wrath,

Approaching with Leonidas. This heard,

Four hundred warriors they appoint to march.

The wily Anaxander is their chief,

With Leontiades. I saw their march 500

Begun, then hasten'd to survey the straits,

Which thou shalt render sacred to renown.

Where, ever mingling with the crumbling soil,

Which moulders round the Malian bay, the sea

In slimy surges rolls; upon the rock, 505

Which forms the utmost limit of the bay,

Thermopylae is stretch'd. Where broadest spread,

It measures threescore paces, bounded here

By

Book I.      L E O N I D A S.      27

By the deep ooze, which underneath presents  
 Its dreary surface; there the lofty cliffs      510  
 Of woody Oeta overlook the pass,  
 And far beyond o'er half the surge below  
 Their horrid umbrage cast. Across the straits  
 An ancient bulwark of the Phocians stands,  
 A wall with turrets crown'd. In station here      515  
 I found the Locrians, and from Thespia's gates  
 Sev'n hundred more Demophilus hath led.  
 His brother's son attends him to the camp,  
 Young Dithyrambus greatly fam'd in war,  
 But more for temperance of mind renown'd;      520  
 Lov'd by his country, and with honours grac'd,  
 His early bloom with brightest glory shines,  
 Nor wantons in the blaze. Here Agis spake.

WELL hast thou painted that illustrious youth.  
 He was my host at Thespia. Though adorn'd      525  
 With highest deeds, by fame and fortune crown'd,  
 His gentle virtues take from Envy's mouth  
 Its blasting venom, and her baneful face  
 Strives on his worth to smile. In silence all  
 Again remain, and Alpheus thus pursues.      530

A CHOSEN troop hath bold Platæa sent,  
 Small in its numbers, but unmatch'd in arms.  
 Above the rest Diomedon their chief  
 Excels in prowess. Signal were his deeds  
 Upon that day of glory, when the fields 535  
 Of Marathon were hid with Persian slain.  
 These guard Thermopylæ. Among the hills  
 A winding path to stranger's feet unknown  
 Affords another entrance into Greece:  
 This by a thousand Phocians is secur'd. 540

HERE Alpheus paus'd. Leonidas embrac'd  
 The noble Spartan, and rejoin'd. Thou know'st  
 What fate to me th'immortal Gods ordain.  
 Frame now thy choice. Accompany our march,  
 Or go to Lacedæmon, and relate, 545  
 How thy discerning mind, and active limbs  
 Have serv'd thy country. From th'impatient mouth  
 Of Alpheus freight these fervent accents broke.

I HAVE not measur'd such a tract of land,  
 Not look'd unwearied on the setting sun, 550  
 And

And through the shade of midnight urg'd my steps  
To rouse the Greeks to battle, that my self  
Might be exempted from the glorious toil.

Return? Oh! no. A second time my feet  
Shall visit thee, Thermopylæ, and there 555

With great Leonidas shall Alpheus find  
An honourable grave. And oh! amid

His countr'ys danger if a Spartan breast  
May feel a private sorrow, not alone

For injur'd Greece I hasten to revenge, 560  
But for a brother's wrongs. A younger hope

Than I, or Maron bless'd our father's years,  
Child of his age, and Polydorus nam'd.

His mind, while tender in its op'ning prime,  
Was bent to rigid virtue. Gen'rous scorn 565

Of pain and danger taught his early strength  
To struggle patient with severest toils.

Oft, when inclement winter chill'd the air,  
And frozen show'rs had swoln Eurotas' stream,

Amid th'imperuous channel would he plunge, 570  
And breast the torrent. On a fatal day,

As in the sea his active limbs he bath'd,



A servile corsair of the Persian king  
 My brother, naked and defenceless, bore  
 Ev'n in my sight to Asia, there to waste 575  
 With all the promise of its growing worth  
 His youth in bondage. Never can my tongue  
 My pains recount, much less my father's woes,  
 The days he wept, the sleepless nights he beat  
 His aged bosom. And shall Alpheus' spear 580  
 Be absent from Thermopylae, nor claim,  
 O Polydorus, vengeance for thy bonds  
 In that first slaughter of the barb'rous foe?

HERE interpos'd Dienece. The hands  
 Of Alpheus and Leonidas he grasp'd, 585  
 And joyful thus. Your glory wants no more,  
 Than that Lycurgus should himself arise  
 To praise the virtue, which his laws inspire.

THUS pass'd these heroes, till the dead of night,  
 The hours in friendly converse, and enjoy'd 590  
 Each other's virtue; happiest of men!  
 At length with gentle heaviness the hand



Of sleep invades their eyelids. On the ground,  
 Oppress'd with slumber, they extend their limbs;  
 When, sliding down the hemisphere, the moon 1595  
 Now plung'd in midnight gloom her silver head.

*End of the first Book.*

# LEONIDAS.

## BOOK II.

### The Argument.

*Leonidas on his approach to the Isthmus is met by the leaders of the troops sent from other Grecian states, and by the deputies, who compos'd the Isthmian council. He harangues them; then proceeds in conjunction with the other forces towards Thermopylae, is join'd by Dithyrambus, and arrives at the straits about noon on the fourth day after his departure from the Isthmus. He is receiv'd at Thermopylae by the Thespian commander Demophilus, and by Anaxander the Theban treacherously recommending Epialtes a Malian, who seeks by a pompous description of the Persian power to intimidate the Grecian leaders, as they are viewing the enemy's camp from the top of mount Oeta. He is answered by Dieneces and Diomedon. Xerxes sends Tigranes*

*Tigranes and Phraortes to the Grecian camp, who are dismiss'd by Leonidas, and conducted back by Dithyrambus and Diomedon; which last, incens'd with the insolence of Tigranes, treats him with contempt and menaces. This occasions a challenge to single combat between Diomedon and Tigranes, Dithyrambus and Phraortes. Epialtes after a conference with Anaxander declares his intention of returning to Xerxes.*

AURORA spread her purple beams around,  
When mov'd the Spartans. Their approach  
is known.

The Isthmian council, and the various chiefs,  
Who led th' auxiliar bands, proceed to meet  
Leonidas; Eupalamus the strong, 5  
Alcmæon, Clonius, Diophantus brave,  
And Hegesander. At their head advanc'd  
Aristobulus, whom Mycenæ's youth  
Attend to war; Mycenæ once elate  
With pow'r and dazzling wealth, and vaunting still  
The name of Agamemnon, who along 11  
The seas of Asia open'd to the wind  
Unnumber'd sails, and darken'd half the shore

Of trembling Phrygia with the hostile shade.

Aristobulus join'd the Spartan king,

15

And thus began. Leonidas, survey

Mycenæ's race. Should ev'ry other Greek

Be aw'd by Xerxes, and his Asian host,

Believe not, we can fear, deriv'd from those,

Who once conducted o'er the foaming surge 20

The strength of Greece, who desert left the fields

Of ravag'd Asia, and her proudest walls

From their foundations humbled to the dust.

LEONIDAS replied not, but address'd

The chiefs around. Illustrious warriors, hail, 25

Who thus undaunted signalize your faith,

And gen'rous ardour in the common cause.

But you, whose counsels prop the Grecian state,

O venerable synod, whose decrees

Have call'd us forth to vanquish, or to die, 30

Thrice hail. Whate'er by valour we obtain

Your wisdom must preserve. With piercing eyes

Each Grecian state contemplate, and discern

Their various tempers. Some with partial care

To

Book II.    L E O N I D A S.    35

To guard their own, neglect the public weal.    35

Cold and unmov'd are others.    Terrour here,

And there corruption reigns.    O fire the brave

With gen'rous zeal to quit their native walls,

And join their valour in the gen'r'al cause ;

Confirm the wav'ring; animate the cold,    40

And watch the faithless: some there are, betray

Themselves and Greece ; their perfidy prevent,

Or call them back to honour.    Let us all

Be link'd in sacred union, and the Greeks

Shall stand the world's whole multitude in arms.    45

If for the spoil, which Paris bore to Troy,

A thousand barks the Hellespont o'erspread ;

Shall not again confederated Greece

Be rous'd to battle, and to freedom give,

What once she gave to fame.    Behold we haste    50

To stop th'invading tyrant.    Till we bleed,

He shall not pour his millions on your plains.

But, as the gods conceal, how long our strength

May stand unconquer'd, or how soon must fall,

Waste not a moment, till consenting Greece    55

Range all her free-born numbers in the field.



LEONIDAS concludes, when awful step'd  
Before the sage assembly one, whose head  
Was hoar with aged snow, and thus replied.

THY great example ev'ry heart unites. 60  
From thee her happiest omens Greece derives  
Of concord, freedom, victory, and fame.  
Go then, O first of mortals, and impress  
Amaze and terrour in the Persians breast;  
The free-born Greeks instructing life to deem 65  
Less dear than virtue, and their country's cause.

THIS heard, Leonidas, thy secret soul  
Exulting tasted of the sweet reward  
Due to thy name from endless time. His eyes  
Once more he turn'd, and view'd in rapt'rous thought  
His native land, which he alone can save; 71  
Then summon'd all his majesty, and o'er  
The Isthmus trod. Behind, the Grecians move  
In deep arrangement. So th'imperial bark  
With stately bulk along the beating tide 75  
In military pomp conducts the pow'r

Book II.      L E O N I D A S.      37

Of some proud navy bounding from the port  
To bear the vengeance of a mighty state  
Against a tyrant's walls. The Grecians march  
Till noon, when halting, as they take repast,      80  
Upon the plain before them they descry  
A troop of Thespians. One above the rest  
In eminence precedes. His glitt'ring shield,  
Whose spacious orb collects th'effulgent beams,  
Which from his throne meridian Phæbus cast,      85  
Flames like another sun. A snowy plume  
Falls o'r his dazzling casq. In wanton curls,  
Which floated in the breathing air, around  
The lofty crest it wav'd. Approaching near  
Beneath the honours of his radiant helm      90  
The warrior now a countenance display'd,  
Where youth in rosy prime with sweetness mix'd  
Its manly beauty. With such modest grace  
Respectful near Leonidas he came,  
As all ideas of his own desert      95  
Were lost in veneration. Phæbus thus  
Appears before his everlasting fire,  
When from his altar in th'imbow'ring grove

Of palmy Delos, or the hallow'd bound  
Of Tenedos, or Claros, where he hears 100  
His hymns and praises from the sons of men,  
He reascends the high Olympian seats;  
Such reverential awe his brow invests,  
Diffusing o'er the glowing flow'r of youth  
New loveliness and grace. The king receives 105  
Th' illustrious Thespian, and began. My tongue  
Would call thee Dithyrambus, for thou bear'st  
All in thy aspect to become that name  
For valour known and virtue. O reveal 109  
Thy birth and charge; whoe'er thou art, my soul  
Desires to know thee, and would call thee friend.  
To whom the youth return'd. O first of Greeks,  
My name is Dithyrambus, which the lips  
Of some benevolent and gen'rous friend  
To thee have sounded with a partial voice, 115  
And thou hast heard with favourable ears.  
I come deputed by the Thespian chief,  
The Theban, and the Locrian, and the brave  
Diomedon, to hasten thy approach. 119  
Three days will bring the Persian pow'rs in view.

He ceas'd. At once the standards are uprear'd.  
 The host till ev'ning with impetuous pace  
 Their march continue. Through the earliest dews  
 Of morning they proceed, and reach the pass,  
 E'er the fourth sun attain'd the sultry noon. 125  
 To their impatient fight no sooner rose  
 The rocks of Oeta, but with rapid feet,  
 And martial sounds of joy they rush'd along;  
 As if the present deity of fame,  
 With wreaths unfading on her temples bound, 130  
 And in her hand adamantinè trump,  
 Had from the hills her radiant form disclos'd,  
 And bade their valour hasten to the field;  
 That she their acts beholding might resound  
 Their name and glory o'er the earth and seas. 135  
 Before the van Leonidas advanc'd,  
 His eye confess'd the ardour of his mind,  
 Which thus found utterance from his eager lips.

All hail! Thermopylae, and you, the powers,  
 Which here preside. All hail! ye silvan Gods,  
 Ye fountain-nymphs, who pour your lucid rills 141

In broken murmurs down the rugged steep.  
Receive us, O benignant, and support  
The cause of Greece. Conceal the secret paths,  
Which o'er the crags, and through the forests wind,  
Untrod by human feet, and trac'd alone 146  
By your immortal footsteps. O defend  
Your own recesses, nor let impious war  
Profane the solemn silence of your groves.  
Thus on your hills your praises shall you hear 150  
From those, whose deeds shall tell th'approving world,  
That not to undeservers did you grant  
Your high protection. You, my valiant friends,  
Now rouse the gen'rous spirit, which inflames  
Your hearts; now prove the vigour of your arms:  
That your recorded actions may survive 156  
Within the breasts of all the brave and free,  
And sound delightful in the ear of Time,  
As long as Neptune beats the Malian bay,  
Or those tall cliffs erect their shaggy tops 160  
So near to heav'n, your monuments of fame.

As in some torrid region, where the head  
Of Ceres bends beneath its golden load,

If



If on the parching ground a fatal spark  
 Fall from a burning brand; the sudden blaze 165  
 Increas'd and aided by tumultuous winds  
 In rapid torrents of involving flames  
 Sweeps o'er the crackling plain, and mounting high  
 In ruddy spires illumines half the skies:  
 Not with less swiftneſs through the glowing ranks  
 The words of great Leonidas diffus'd 171  
 A more than mortal fervour. Ev'ry heart  
 Diſtends with great ideas, ſuch as raiſe  
 The patriot's virtue, and the ſoldier's fire,  
 When danger in its moſt tremendous form 175  
 Seems to their eyes moſt lovely. In their thoughts  
 Imagination pictures all the ſcenes  
 Of war, the purple field, the heaps of death,  
 And glitt'ring trophies pil'd with Perſian arms.

But now the Grecian leaders, who before 180  
 Were ſtation'd near Thermopylæ, accoſt  
 The Spartan king. The Theſpian chief allied  
 To Dithyrampus firſt the ſilence broke,  
 An ancient warrior. From behind his caſque,

Whose crested weight his aged temples press'd, 185  
 His slender hairs, which time had silver'd o'er,  
 Flow'd venerable down. He thus began.

Joy now shall crown the period of my days,  
 And whether with my father's dust I sleep,  
 Or slain by Persia's sword I press the earth, 190  
 Our common parent, be it as the gods  
 Shall best determine. For the present hour  
 I bless their bounty, which has giv'n my age  
 To see the great Leonidas, and bid  
 The hero welcome on this glorious shore; 195  
 Where he, by heav'n selected from mankind,  
 Shall fix the basis of the Grecian weal.

HERE too the wily Anaxander spake.  
 Hail! glorious chief. Of all the Theban race  
 We shall at least with gladsome bosoms meet 200  
 The great defender of the Grecian cause.  
 O! may oblivion o'er the shame of Thebes  
 Its darkest wing extend, or they alone  
 Be curs'd by fame, whose impious counsels turn  
 Their countrymen from virtue. Thebes alas! 205  
 Still

Still had been buried in dishonest sloth,  
Had not to wake her languor Alpheus come  
The messenger of freedom. O accept  
Our grateful hearts; thou, Alpheus, art the cause,  
That Anaxander from his native gates      210  
Here hath not borne a solitary spear,  
Nor these inglorious in their walls remain'd  
But longer do we loiter? Haste, my friends,  
To yonder cliff, which points its shade afar,  
And view the Persian camp. The morning sun      215  
Beheld their numbers hide th'adjacent plains.  
Lo! here a Malian, Epialtes nam'd,  
Who with the foe from Thracia's bounds hath  
march'd.

He said. His seeming virtue all deceiv'd.  
The camp not long had Epialtes join'd,      220  
By race a Malian. Eloquent his tongue,  
But false his heart, and abject. He was skill'd  
To grace perfidious counsels, and to cloath  
In swelling phrase the baseness of his soul,  
Foul nurse of treasons. To the tents of Greece,  
Himself a Greek a faithless spy he came.      226

Soon

Soon to the friends of Xerxes he repair'd,  
The Theban chiefs, and nightly consult held,  
How best with consternation to deject  
The Spartan valour, or how best betray. 230  
With him the leaders climb the arduous hill,  
From whence the dreadful prospect they command,  
Where endless plains by white pavilions hid  
Spread, like the vast Atlantic, when no shore,  
No rock or promontory stops the sight 235  
Unbounded, as it wanders; but the moon  
Resplendent eye of night in fullest orb  
Throughout th'interminated surface throws  
Its rays abroad, and decks in snowy light  
The dancing billows; such was Xerxes' camp:  
A pow'r unrivall'd by the greatest king, 241  
Or conqueror, that e'er with ruthless hands  
Dissolving all the sacred ties, which bind  
The happiness of nations, have alarm'd  
The sleeping fury Discord from her den. 245  
Not from the hundred brazen gates of Thebes,  
The tow'rs of Memphis, and the pregnant fields  
By Nile's prolifick torrents delug'd o'er,

E'er



I. Book II. L E O N I D A S. 45

E'er flow'd such armies with th'Egyptian lord  
Renown'd Sesostris; who with trophies fill'd 250

The vanquish'd earth, and o'er the rapid foam  
Of distant Tanaïs, and the huge expanse  
Of trembling Ganges spread his dreaded name:

Nor yet in Asia's far extended bounds  
E'er met such numbers, not when Belus drew 255

Th' Assyrian bands to conquest, or the pride  
Of high-exalted Babylon survey'd

The plains along Euphrates cover'd wide  
With armed myriads swarming from her walls;

When at the rage of dire Semiramis 260  
Peace fled affrighted from the ravag'd East.

Yet all this hideous face of war dismays  
No Grecian heart. Unterrified they stood.

Th' immeasurable camp with fearless eyes  
They traverse, while in meditation near 265

The treach'rous Malian waits, collecting all  
His pomp of words to paint the hostile pow'r;

Nor yet with falsehood arms his fraudulent tongue  
To feign a tale of terrour: Truth herself

Beyond the reach of fiction to inhance 270  
Now



Now aids his treason, and with cold dismay  
Might pierce the boldest breast, unless secur'd  
By dauntless virtue, which disdains to live  
From liberty divorc'd. Requested now  
By ev'ry voice, the traitor spake, and all 275  
Attentive ears incline. Oh! Greeks and friends!  
Can I behold my native Malian fields  
Presenting hostile millions to your fight,  
And not with grief suppress the horrid tale,  
Which you exact from these ill-omen'd lips. 280  
On Thracià's sands I first beheld the foe,  
When, joining Europe with the Asian shore,  
A mighty bridge th'outragious waves restrain'd,  
And stem'd th'impetuous current; while in arms  
The universal progeny of men 285  
Seem'd all before me trampling o'er the sea  
By thousands and ten thousands: Persians, Medes,  
Assyrians, Saces, Indians, swarthy files  
From Æthiopia, Ægypt's tawny sons,  
Arabians, Bactrians, Parthians, all the strength 290  
Of Libya and of Asia. Neptune groan'd  
Beneath the burthen, and indignant heav'd

His

His neck against th' incumbent weight. In vain  
 The violence of Boreas and the East,  
 With rage combin'd, against th'unshaken pile 295  
 Dash'd half the Hellespont. The eastern world  
 Sev'n days and nights uninterrupted pass,  
 And pour on Thracia's confines. They accept  
 The Persian lord, and range their hardy race  
 Beneath his standards. Macedonia's youth 300  
 With all Thessalia next, and ev'ry Greek,  
 Who dwells beyond Thermopylae, attend.  
 Thus not alone embodied Asia lifts  
 Her threatening lance, but Macedon and Thrace;  
 Whose martial loins with daring warriors teem,  
 And faithless Greeks in multitudes untold 306  
 The Persian monarch aid. Celestial pow'rs!  
 And thou, who reignest over men and gods,  
 Who in a moment by thy will supreme  
 Canst quell the mighty in their proudest hopes, 310  
 And raise the weak to safety, thou impart  
 Thy instant succour; interpose thy arm;  
 With lightning blast their legions: Oh! confound  
 With triple-bolted thunder Persia's camp,

Whence

Whence like an inundation with the morn 315  
Shall millions rush, and overwhelm the Greeks.  
Resistance else were vain against an host,  
Which covers all Thessalia; for beyond  
The Malian plains thus widely stretch'd below,  
Beyond the utmost measure of the sight 320  
Bent from the height of this aspiring cliff,  
Lie yet more hideous numbers, which might drain  
The streams of copious rivers with their thirst,  
And with their arrows hide the mid-day sun.

THEN shall we join our battle in the shade, 325  
Dieneces replied. Not calmly thus  
Diomedon. On Xerxes' camp he bends  
His low'ring brow, which frowns had furrow'd o'er,  
And thus exclaim'd. Bellona, turn and view  
With joyful eyes that field, the fatal stage, 330  
Which regal madness hath for you prepar'd  
To exercise your horrors. Thou, O Death,  
Shalt riot here unceasing, when the rocks  
Of yonder pass with bleeding ranks are strew'd;  
And all, who shun th' avenging steel of Greece, 335

By

By pestilence and meager famine seiz'd,  
Shall with variety of ruin feast  
Thy unabated hunger. Thus he spake,  
While on the host immense his gloomy eyes  
He fix'd disdainful, and its strength defied. 340

MEANTIME within th' entrenchment of the  
Greeks

From Asia's monarch delegated came  
Tigranes and Phraortes. From the hills  
Leonidas conducts th' impatient chiefs.  
Around the hero in his tent they throng, 345  
When thus Tigranes their attention calls.

AMBASSADORS from Persia's king we stand  
Before you, Grecians. To display the pow'r  
Of our great master were a needless task.  
The name of Xerxes, Asia's mighty lord, 350  
Invincible, and seated on a throne  
Surpassing human lustre, must have reach'd  
Th' extremest border of the earth, and taught  
The hearts of men to own resistless force

E

With

With awe, and low submission. Yet I swear 355  
By yon refulgent orb, which flames above,  
The glorious symbol of th' eternal pow'r,  
This military throng, this shew of war  
Persuade me, you have never heard that name,  
At whose dread sound the billows wide remote 360  
Of Indus tremble, and the Caspian wave,  
Th' Ægyptian tide, and Hellespontic surge  
With homage roll. O impotent and rash!  
Whom yet the large beneficence of heav'n,  
And our great monarch merciful and kind 365  
Deign to preserve. Resign your arms; disperse  
Each to your cities; there with humblest hands  
Before your lord bestrew the way with flow'rs.

As through th' extensive grove, whose leafy boughs  
Intwining crown some eminence with shade, 370  
The tempests rush sonorous, and between  
The crashing branches roar; by fierce disdain  
And indignation thus the Grecians mov'd  
With clam'rous murmurs close the Persian's speech.  
But Sparta's king arising, all is hush'd. 375  
In sudden silence; when he thus replied.



O PERSIAN, when to Xerxes thou return'st,  
 Say, thou hast told the wonders of his pow'r;  
 Then say, thou saw'st a slender band of Greece,  
 Which dares his boasted millions to the field. 380

THE Spartan said. Th' Ambassadors retire.  
 Them o'er the limits of the Grecian lines  
 Diomedon and Thespia's youth conduct.  
 With slow solemnity they all proceed  
 In fullen silence. But their looks denote 385  
 What speech would shame and weaken. Wrath  
 contracts

The forehead of Diomedon. His teeth  
 Gnash with impatience for delay'd revenge.  
 Disdain, which sprung from conscious merit, flush'd  
 The cheek of Dithyrambus. On the face 390  
 Of either Persian insolence and pride,  
 Incens'd by disappointment, gloomy low'r'd.  
 But when they reach'd the limits of the straits,  
 Where Xerxes' camp began to open wide  
 Its deep, immense arrangement; then the heart 395  
 Of vain Tigranes, swelling at the sight,  
 Thus overflows in loud and haughty phrase.

O ARIMANIUS, origin of ill,  
Have we demanded of thy ruthless pow'r  
Thus with the curse of madness to afflict 400  
These wretched men? But since thy dreadful will  
To irresistible perdition dooms  
The sons of Greece, in vain should we oppose.  
Be thy dire will accomplish'd, let them fall,  
And fatten with their blood their native soil. 405

ENRAG'D the stern Diomedon replies.  
Thou servile, base dependent on a king,  
Inglorious mercenary, slave to those,  
Whom most we scorn, thou boaster, dost thou know,  
That I beheld the Marathonian field; 410  
When, like the Libyan sands before the wind,  
Your host was scatter'd by th'unconquer'd Greeks;  
Where thou perhaps didst turn before this arm  
To ignominious flight thy shiv'ring limbs?  
O may I find thee in to-morrow's fight! 415  
Then on this rocky pavement shalt thou lie  
Beneath this arm to feast the vulture's beak.

He ended here, and thus the Persian chief.  
O thou, whose hand omnipotent protects  
The throne of Xerxes, bend thy sacred ear! 420  
For lo! my first victorious fruits of war  
To thee I here devote, the gory spoils,  
Which from this Grecian with the rising dawn  
In sight of either host my arm shall rend.

PHRAORTES interrupting then began. 425  
I too would find among the Grecian chiefs  
One, who in battle dare abide my spear.

To him thus answer'd Thespia's gallant youth.  
Thou look'st on me, O Persian. Worthier far  
Thou might'st indeed have singled from our host,  
But none more willing to essay thy force. 431  
Yes, I will prove before the eye of Mars,  
How far the valour of the meanest Greek  
Beyond thy vaunts deserves the palm of fame.

THIS said, the Persians to their king repair, 435  
Back to their camp the Grecians. There they found

Each soldier poising his extended spear,  
And his large buckler bracing on his arm,  
For instant war prepar'd. Through all the files  
Each leader moves exulting, and with praise 440  
And exhortations aids their native warmth.  
Alone the Theban Anaxander pin'd,  
Who thus apart address'd his Malian friend.

WHAT has thy lofty eloquence avail'd,  
Alas! in vain attempting to confound 445  
The Spartan valour? With redoubled fires  
See how their bosoms glow. They wish to die,  
And wait impatient for th' unequal fight.  
Too soon will come th' insuperable foes,  
And in promiscuous ruin all be whelm'd; 450  
Nor shall our merit to the Persian lord  
Be told, or known: for whose advent'rous feet  
To serve the Thebans, through the guarded pass,  
The Grecian watch eluding, will approach  
The tents of Asia, that the king may know, 455  
And spare his friends amid the gen'ral wreck;  
When his high-swoln resentment, like a flood

Increas'd

Increas'd with stormy show'rs, 'shall cover Greece  
With desolation? Epialtes here.

WHENCE, Anaxander, this unjust despair?      460  
Is there a path on Oeta's hills unknown  
To Epialtes? O'er the trackless rock,  
And mazy grove shall pass my secret steps.  
This night I part. Thy merit shall be told  
To Persia's king. Thou only watch the hour,      465  
Nor then be tardy, when he wants thy aid.

*End of the second Book.*



# LEONIDAS.

## BOOK III.

### The Argument.

*Tigranes and Phraortes repair to Xerxes, whom they find seated on a throne surrounded by his satraps in a magnificent pavilion; while the Magi stand before him, and sing an hymn containing the religion of Zoroastres. Xerxes, notwithstanding the arguments of his brothers Hyperanthes and Abrocomes, gives no credit to the ambassadors, who report, that the Grecians are determin'd to maintain the pass against him; but commands Demaratus an exil'd king of Sparta to attend him, and ascends his chariot to take a view of the Grecians himself. He passes through the midst of his army consisting of many nations differing in arms, customs, and manners. He advances to the entrance of the straits, and surpris'd at the behaviour of the Spartans demands*

*mands the reason of it from Demaratus; which occasions a conversation between them on the mercenary forces of Persia, and the militia of Greece. Demaratus weeping at the sight of his countrymen, is comforted by Hyperanthes. Xerxes still incredulous commands Tigranes and Phraortes to bring the Grecians bound before him the next day, and retires to his pavilion.*

**N**OW had Tigranes and Phraortes gain'd  
The splendid tent of Xerxes. Him they  
found

Bigirt with princes, and illustrious chiefs,  
The potentates of Asia. Near his side  
His valiant brothers stood, Abrocomes, 5  
And Hyperanthes, then Pharnuchus brave,  
Pandates, Intaphernes, mighty lords,  
And numbers more in purple splendour clad,  
With homage all attending round the throne,  
Whose gorgeous seat erected high upbore 10  
Their regal master. He above their heads  
Look'd down imperious. So the stately tow'r  
Of Belus, mingling its majestick front

With heav'n's bright azure, from on high survey'd  
The huge extent of Babylon with all 15

Its sumptuous domes and palaces beneath.

That day the monarch deem'd to enter Greece,  
And hide her fields with war; but first ordains,  
That grateful hymns should celebrate the name  
Of Oromasdes: so the Persians call'd 20

The world's great author. By the king's decree  
The Magi stood before th'unfolded tent.  
Fire blaz'd beside them. Tow'rd's the sacred flame  
They turn'd, and sent their tuneful praise to heav'n.

FROM Zoroastres was the song deriv'd, 25  
Who on the hills of Persia from his cave  
With flow'rs incircled, and with murm'ring founts,  
That cheer'd the solemn mansion, had reveal'd,  
How Oromasdes, radiant source of good,  
Original, immortal fram'd the globe 30

With all its varied beauty: how with stars  
By him the heav'ns were spangled: how the sun,  
Refulgent Mithra, purest spring of light,  
And genial warmth, whence fruitful nature smiles,

Burst

Book III. L E O N I D A S. 59

Burst from the east at his creating voice; 35

When streight beyond the golden verge of day

Night shew'd the horrors of her distant reign,

Whence black, and hateful Arimanius sprung,

The author foul of evil: he with shades

From his dire mansion veil'd the earth and skies, 40

Or to destruction chang'd the solar beam,

When parching fields deny the foodful grain,

And from their channels fly th'exhaling streams,

Whence pestilence, and famine: how the pow'r

Of Oromasdes in the human breast 45

Benevolence, and equity infus'd,

Truth, temperance, and wisdom sprung from heav'n;

When Arimanius blacken'd all the soul

With falsehood, and injustice, with desires

Insatiable, with violence, and rage, 50

Malignity, and folly. If the hand

Of Oromasdes on precarious life

Shed wealth and pleasure, soon th'infernal god

With wild excess, or av'rice blasts the joy.

Thou, Oromasdes, victory dost give. 55

By thee with fame the regal head is crown'd,

Great

Great Xerxes owns thy succour. When with storms  
 The hate of direful Arimanius swell'd  
 The Hellespont, thou o'er the angry surge  
 The destin'd master of the world didst lead      60  
 This day his promis'd glories to enjoy,  
 When Greece affrighted to his arms shall bend  
 Ev'n as at last shall Arimanius fall  
 Before thy might, and evil be no more.

THE Magi ceas'd their harmony; when now  
 Before the king with adoration bow'd      66  
 Tigranes and Phraortes. Prone they lay,  
 And o'er their foreheads spread their abject hands,  
 As from a present deity too bright  
 For mortal vision to conceal their eyes.      70  
 At length in humble phrase Tigranes thus.

O XERXES, live for ever! Gracious lord!  
 Who dost permit thy servants to approach  
 Thy awful sight, and prostrate thus to own  
 Thy majesty and greatness. May the pow'r      75  
 Of Oromasdes stretch thy scepter'd arm

O'er



Book III. LEONIDAS. 61

O'er all the nations from the Indian shores,  
Ev'n to the waters of the western main,  
From northern Tanaïs to the source of Nile!  
And still from thee may Arimanius turn 80  
Against thy foes his malice to mankind!  
By him, ev'n now with frenzy smote, the Greeks  
Reject thy proffer'd clemency. The morn  
Shall see them bleed the victims of thy wrath

66  
HERE, to his brothers turning, Xerxes spake. 85  
Say, Hyperanthes? Does thy soul believe  
These tydings? Sure these slaves have never dar'd  
To face the Grecians, but delude our ear  
With base impostures, which their fears suggest.

70  
To him this answer Hyperanthes form'd. 90  
O from his servants may the king avert  
His indignation! Greece was fam'd of old  
For martial virtue, and intrepid sons:  
I have essay'd their valour, and with me  
Abrocomes can witness. When our fire, 95  
The great Darius, to th' Athenian shore  
With

With Artaphernes, and with Datis sent  
Our tender youth; at Marathon we found,  
How vain the hopes, that numbers should dismay  
A foe resolv'd on victory, or death. 100  
Yet not as one contemptible, or base  
Let me appear before thee: though the Greeks  
With such unconquer'd spirits be indu'd,  
Soon as the king shall summon me to war,  
He shall behold me in the dang'rous van 105  
Exalt my spear, and pierce the hostile ranks,  
Or sink before them: Xerxes then return'd.

WHY over Asia, and the Libyan soil,  
With all their nations does my potent arm  
Extend its scepter? Wherefore do I sweep 110  
Across the globe with millions in my train?  
Why shade the Ocean with unnumber'd sails?  
Whence all this pow'r, unless th'eternal will  
Had doom'd to give one master to the wold,  
And that the earth's extremity alone 115  
Should bound my empire? He for this reduc'd  
Revolted Ægypt, and enlarg'd my sway

With

With sandy Libya, and the sultry clime  
Of Æthiopia. He for this subdu'd  
The Hellespontic rage, and taught the sea 120  
Obedience to my pow'r. Then cease to think,  
That heav'n deserting now the cause of kings  
Those despicable Grecians will inspire  
With courage more than human, and expunge  
The common fears of nature from their breasts.  
He ceas'd, when thus Abrocomes began. 126

THE king commands us to reveal our hearts:  
Then may the sun to lightning change his beams,  
And blast my head with ruin; may the king  
Look on his servant with a loathing eye, 130  
If what I here affirm be false, or vain,  
That yonder Grecians will oppose our course.

THE king arose. No more: prepare my car;  
The Spartan exile Demaratus call:  
We will our selves advance and view the foe. 135

THE monarch will'd; and suddenly he hears  
His trampling horses. High on silver wheels

The

The iv'ry car with azure sapphirs shone,  
Carulean beryls, and the jasper green,  
The emerald, the ruby's glowing blush, 140  
The flaming topaz with its golden beam,  
The pearl, th'impurpled amethyst, and all  
The various gems, which India's mines afford  
To deck the pomp of kings. In burnish'd gold  
A sculptur'd eagle from behind displays 145  
Its stately neck, and o'er the monarch's head  
Extends its dazzling wings. Eight gen'rous steeds,  
Which on the fam'd Nysean plain were nurs'd  
In wintry Media, drew the radiant car.  
Not those of old to Hercules refus'd, 150  
By false Laomedon, nor they, which bore  
The son of Thetis through the scatter'd rear  
Of Troy's devoted race, might these surpass  
In strength, or beauty. With obedient pride  
They heard their lord: exulting in the air 155  
They toss'd their foreheads, while the silver manes  
Smote on their glitt'ring necks. The king ascends;  
Beside his footstool Demaratus sat.  
The charioteer now shakes the golden reins,

Strong

Book III.      L E O N I D A S.      65

Strong Patiramphes. At the signal bound      160

Th' attentive steeds; the chariot flew; behind

Ten thousand horse in thunder swept the field.

The eastern bands (so Xerxes had ordain'd)

Between the sea-beat margin, and the camp

All wait imbattled, all prepar'd to pass      165

Thermopylæ. To these with rapid wheels

Th' imperial car proceeds. Th' approaching king

Soon through the wide battalions is proclaim'd.

He now draws nigh. Th' innumerable host

Roll back by nations, and admit their lord      170

With all his satraps. From his crystal dome

Rais'd on the bottom of the watry world

Thus when the potent ruler of the floods

With each cærulean deity ascends,

Thron'd on his pearly chariot; all the deep      175

Divides its bosom to th' emerging god.

So Xerxes rode between the Asian world

On either side receding; when, as down

Th' immeasurable ranks his fight was lost,

A momentary gloom o'ercast his mind,      180

While this reflection fill'd his eyes with tears:

F

That



That soon, as Time an hundred years had told,  
Not one of all those thousands should survive.  
Whence to obscure thy pride arose that cloud?  
Was it, that once humanity could touch 185  
A tyrant's breast? or rather did thy soul  
Repine, O Xerxes, at the bitter thought,  
That all thy pow'r was mortal? But the veil  
Of sadness soon forsook his brightning eyes,  
As with adoring homage millions bow'd, 190  
And to his heart relentless pride recall'd.  
Elate the mingled prospect he surveys  
Of glitt'ring files unnumber'd, chariots scyth'd  
On thundring axles roll'd with haughty steeds  
In sumptuous trappings clad (Barbaric pomp) 195  
Which tore with spurning hoofs the sandy beach;  
While ev'ry banner to the sun expands  
Its gorgeous folds, that beam'd with gold, with shields,  
Tiaras, helms environ'd, and with spears  
In number equal to the bladed grass, 200  
Whose living green in vernal beauty cloaths  
Thessalia's vale. What pow'rs of sounding verse  
Can to the mind present th'amazing scene?

Book III. L E O N I D A S. 67

Not thee, whom Rumour's fabling voice delights,  
Poetic Fancy, to my aid I call; 205  
But thou, historic Truth, support my song,  
Which shall the various multitude display,  
Their arms, their manners, and their native seats.

THE Persians first in scaly corselets shone  
With colours varying on the gorgeous sleeves, 210  
A gen'rous nation. From their infant age  
Their tongues were practis'd in the love of truth,  
Their limbs inur'd to ev'ry manly toil,  
To brace the bow, to rule th'impetuous steed,  
And dart the javelin; worthy to enjoy 215  
The liberty, their injur'd fathers lost,  
Whose arms for Cyrus overturn'd the strength  
Of Babylon and Sardis, and advanc'd  
The victors head above his country's laws.  
Such were the Persians; but, untaught to form 220  
The ranks of battle, with unequal force  
Against the phalanx of the Greeks they stood,  
And to the massy shield, and weighty spear  
A target light, and slender lance oppos'd.

On ev'ry head tiaras rose, like tow'rs,      225

Impenetrable. All with burnish'd gold

Blaz'd their gay sandals, and the floating reins

Of each proud courser. Daggers from their thighs

A well-stor'd quiver from their shoulders hung,

And strongest bows of mighty size they bore.      230

Next, with resembling arms the Medes are seen,

The Cissians, and Hircanians. Media once

From her bleak mountains aw'd the subject East.

Her kings in cold Ecbatana were thron'd,

The Cissians march'd from Susa's regal walls,      235

From sultry fields o'erspread with branching palms,

And white with lillies, water'd by the tides

Of fam'd Choaspes, whose transparent waves

The golden goblet wafts to Persia's kings:

No other stream the royal lip bedews.      240

Hyrcania's race forsook their fruitful clime ○

Dark with the verdure of expanding oaks,

To Ceres dear and Bacchus. There the corn

Bent by its golden burthen sheds unrep'd

Its plenteous seed impregnating the soil      245

With future harvests; while the bees reside

Among

Among th'intwining branches of the groves,  
 Where with their labours they enrich the leaves,  
 Which flow with sweetness. Next, Assyria's sons  
 Their brazen helmets display, th'unskilful work    250  
 Of rude Barbarians. Thick-wove flax defends  
 Their chest and loins. A buckler guards their arm.  
 Girt with a falchion each a mace sustains  
 O'erlaid with iron. On Euphrates' banks  
 In Babylon's stupendous walls they dwell,    255  
 And o'er the plains, where once with mightier tow'rs  
 Old Ninus rear'd its head, th'imperial seat  
 Of eldest tyrants. These Chaldæa joins,  
 The land of shepherds. On the pastures wide  
 There Belus first discern'd the various course    260  
 Of heav'n's bright planets, and the clust'ring stars  
 With names distinguish'd, whence himself was  
 deem'd

The chief of gods. His heav'n-ascending fane  
 In Babylon the proud Assyrians rais'd.  
 Drawn from the fertile soil, which Ochus laves,    265  
 The Bactrians stood, like Persia's bands attir'd,  
 Though less their javelins, and their bows of cane;

The Paricanians next all rough with hides  
Of shaggy goats, with bows and daggers arm'd.  
Alike in horrid garb the Caspian train 270  
From barren mountains, and the dreary coast,  
Which bounds the stormy lake, that bears their name,  
With cany bows, and scymetars were led.  
The Indians then, a threefold band, appear'd.  
Part guide the horse, and part the rapid car; 275  
The rest on foot within the bending cane  
For slaughter held their iron-pointed reeds.  
These o'er the Indus from the distant floods  
Of Ganges pass'd, and left a region lov'd  
By lavish nature. There the plenteous year 280  
Twice crown'd with harvests smiles. The honey'd  
shrub,  
The cinnamon, and spikenard bless their fields.  
Array'd in native wealth the warriors shone.  
Their ears were grac'd with pendants, and their hands  
Incircled wore a bracelet starr'd with gems. 285  
These were the nations, who to Xerxes sent  
Their mingled aids of infantry and horse.  
Now,



Now, Muse, recount what numbers yet untold  
On foot obscur'd the surface of the shore;  
Or who in chariots, or on camels bear                    290  
The loosen'd sand. The Parthians first advance,  
Then weak in numbers o'er the Malian strand  
Far from their lonely vales, and woody hills,  
Not yet renown'd for warlike steeds, they trod.  
With them the Sogdians, Dadices arrang'd,                    295  
Gandarians, and Chorasmians, all attir'd,  
Like Bactria's sons. To these the Saces join,  
From cold Imaüs drawn, from Oxus' waves,  
And Cyra built on Iäxartes' brink,  
The bound of Persia's Empire. Wild, untam'd, 300  
And prone to rage, their desarts they forlook.  
A bow, a falchion, and a pond'rous ax  
The savage legions arm'd. A pointed cask  
O'er each grim visage rear'd its iron cone.  
In arms, like Persians, the Saranges stood.                    305  
High as the knee their buskins stretch'd, and clung  
Around their ham. With glowing colours dy'd  
Gay shone their varied garments. Next are seen  
The Pactyan, Mycian, and the Utian train

In skins of goats, all horrid. Bows they wield 310  
Of springy reed, with poniards at their sides.  
With spotted hides of leopards all array'd,  
Or with the spoil from tawny lions torn  
In graceful range the Æthiopians stand  
Of equal stature, and a beauteous frame; 315  
Though scorching Phæbus had imbrown'd their face,  
And curl'd their crisped locks. In ancient song  
Renown'd for justice, riches they disdain'd,  
As foes to virtue. From their seat remote  
On Nilus' verge above th' Ægyptian bound, 320  
Forc'd by their king's malignity and pride  
These friends of hospitality and peace,  
Themselves uninjur'd, wag'd reluctant war  
Against a land, whose climate, and whose name  
To them were strange. With hardest stone they point  
The rapid arrow. Bows of hideous length, 326  
Form'd with th' elastic branches of the palm,  
They bore, and lances arm'd with horns of goats,  
And maces strong with iron. Now, O Muse,  
Recite the nations, who in helmets fram'd 330  
Of various parts, and close-connected joints,

With

Book III. L E O N I D A S. 73

With darts, and poniards, shields, and lances weak,  
A feeble train, attend their tyrant's will,  
All victims destin'd to imbrue with gore

The Grecian spears; the Paphlagonians first 335

From where Carambis with projected brows  
O'erlooks the dusky Euxine wrapt in mists,  
And where through flow'rs, that paint its various  
banks,

Parthenius flows, the Mariandynians next,

The Matienian, and the Ligyan bands. 340

With them the Syrian multitudes, who dwell

Near Daphne's grove, who cultivate the glebe

Wide-water'd by Orontes, who along

Th' extended ridge of Libanus are nurs'd

Among the cedars, or with foodful dates 345

Pluckt from the palms, whose fruitage grac'd the  
plains

Around Damascus: all, who bear the name

Of Cappadocians, swell the Syrian host,

With those, who gather from the fragrant shrub

The aromatic balsam, and extract 350

Its milky juice along the lovely side

Of winding Jordan, till immers'd it sleep  
Beneath the pitchy surface, which obscures  
Th' Asphaltic lake. The Phrygians then advance.  
To them their ancient colony is join'd, 355  
Th' Armenian bands. These see the bursting springs  
Of strong Euphrates cleave the yielding earth,  
And wide in lakes expanding hide the plain.  
Thence with collected waters fierce and deep  
Its passage rending through diminish'd rocks 360  
To Babylon it foams. Not so the wave  
Of soft Araxes to the Caspian glides.  
But, stealing imperceptibly, it laves  
The fruitful herbage of Armenia's meads.

NEXT, strange to view, in similar attire, 365  
Though far unlike in manners to the Greeks,  
Appear the Lydians. Wantonness and sport  
Were all their care. Beside Cäyster's stream,  
Or smooth Mæander winding silent by,  
Or near Pactolus' wave among the vines 370  
Of Tmolus rising, or the wealthy tide  
Of golden-fanded Hermus they allure  
The sight enchanted with the graceful dance,

Or

Book III.      L E O N I D A S.      75

Or with melodious sweetness charm the air,  
And melt to softest languishment the soul.      375

What to the battle's danger could incite  
These tender sons of luxury? The last  
Of their stern monarch urg'd their shiv'ring limbs  
Through all the tempests, which enrag'd the main,  
And shook beneath their trembling steps the pile,  
That join'd the Asian and the western worlds.      381

To these Mæonia hot with sulph'rous mines  
Unites her troops. No tree adorns their fields  
Unblest'd with verdure, and with ashes strewn.

Black are the rocks, and ev'ry hill deform'd.      385

With conflagration. Helmets press'd their brows.

Two darts they brandish'd. Round their woolly vest  
A sword was girt, and hairy hides compos'd

Their bucklers round and light. The Mysians left  
Olympus wood-envelop'd, and the soil      390

Wash'd by Cæicus, and the baneful tide

Of Lycus, nurse of serpents. Targets, helms,

And wooden javelins harden'd in the flames

They bore. By these, imbattled next are seen

An ancient nation, who in early times,      395

By



By Trojan arms assail'd, their native land  
Esteem'd less dear than freedom, and exchang'd  
Their seat on Strymon, where in Thrace it pours  
Its freezing current, for the distant shores  
Of fishy Sangar. These Bythynians nam'd 400  
Their habitations to the sacred feet  
Of Dindymus extend. Yet there they groan'd  
Beneath oppression, and their freedom mourn'd  
On Sangar now, as once on Strymon lost.  
The ruddy skins of foxes form'd their cask; 405  
Their shields were fashion'd like the horned moon;  
A dart, and slender poniard arm'd their hands;  
A vest embrac'd their bodies, while abroad  
Ting'd with unnumber'd hues a mantle flow'd.  
But other Thracians, who their former name 410  
Retain'd in Asia, stood with shining helms.  
The horns of bulls in imitating bras  
Adorn'd the lofty crest. Phœnician cloth  
Their legs infolds, with brightest purple stain'd;  
And through the forest wont to chase the boar, 415  
A hunter's spear they grasp. — What nations still  
On either side of Xerxes, while he pass'd,

Present

Present their huge array, and swell his soul  
With more than mortal pride? The num'rous train  
Of Moschians and Macronians now succeed,    420  
And Mosynæcians, who, with berries fed,  
In wooden tow'rs along the Pontic shore  
Repose their painted limbs; the mirthful race  
Of Tibarenians next, whose wanton minds  
Delight in sport, and laughter: all in casks    425  
Of wood, with shields, and lances small, whose points  
Beyond proportion lengthen. Then approach,  
In garments o'er their spacious bosom clasp'd,  
And part with javelins, part with Lycian bows,  
A people destin'd in eternal verse,    430  
Ev'n thine, sublime Mæonides, to live.  
These are the Milyans, Solymi their name  
In thy celestial strains, Pisidia's hills  
Their dwelling. Once, a formidable train,  
They fac'd the great Bellerophon in war,    435  
Now doom'd a more tremendous foe to meet,  
Themselves unnerv'd with bondage, and to leave  
Their putrid bodies for the dogs of Greece.  
Next are the Marian legions furnish'd all

With

With shields of skins, with darts, and helmets wove  
Of strongest texture. Aria's host pretend 441  
The Bactrian lance, and brace the Persian bow,  
Drawn from a region horrid all with thorn,  
One hideous waste of sands, which mock the toil  
Of patient culture; save one favour'd spot, 445  
Which, like an isle, emerges from the wild,  
In verdure clad, and interspers'd with vines,  
Whose gen'rous clusters yield a juice, that scorns  
The injuries of time. Yet nature's hand  
Had sown their rocks with coral, and enrich'd 450  
Their desert hills with veins of sapphirs blue,  
And those, whose azure sparks of gold adorn.  
These from the turbant flame. On ev'ry neck  
The coral blushes through the num'rous throng.  
The Allarodians, and Sasperian bands 455  
Were arm'd with poniards like the Cholchian host;  
Their heads were guarded with a helm of wood.  
Short were their spears, of hides undress'd their shields.  
The Cholchians march'd from Phasis, and the shores,  
Where once Medea, fair enchantress, stood, 460  
And wondring view'd the first advent'rous bark,

That

That stem'd the Pontic foam. From Argo's side

The demigods descended, and repair'd

To her fell fire's inhospitable walls.

His blooming graces Jason there display'd.    465

With ev'ry art of eloquence divine

He claim'd the golden fleece. The virgin heard,

She gaz'd with fatal ravishment, and lov'd.

Then to the hero she resigns her heart;

Her magic tames the brazen-footed bulls;    470

She lulls the sleepless dragon, and to Greece

With faithless Jason wafts the radiant prize.

The Cholchians then pursu'd their steps with war,

And now with ancient enmity inflam'd,

Or else compell'd by Xerxes to recal    475

The long-forgotten wrong, they menace Greece

With desolation. Next in Persian guise

A croud advanc'd, who left the various isles

In Persia's gulph, and round Arabia known.

Some in their native topaz were adorn'd,    480

From Ophiodes, and Topazos sprung;

And some with shells of tortoises, which brood

Around Casitis' verge. To them were join'd

Those,

Those, who reside, where Erythras intomb'd  
Lies all beset with palms, a pow'rful king, 485  
Who nam'd of old the Erythræan main.  
The Lybians next are plac'd. In chariots scyth'd  
They sat terrific, cloath'd in skins, with darts  
Of wood well-temper'd in the hardning flames.  
Not Lybia's desarts from tyrannic sway 490  
Could hide her sons; much less could freedom  
dwell

Amid the plenty of Arabia's fields:  
Where spicy cassia, and the fragrant reed,  
And myrrh, and hallow'd frankincense perfume  
The zephir's wing. A bow of largest size 495  
Th' Arabians wield, and o'er their lucid vest  
Loose floats a mantle on their shoulder clasp'd.  
Of these two myriads on the lofty back  
Of camels rode, that match'd the swiftest horse.

SUCH were the numbers, which from Asia led  
Bow'd down with low prostration to the wheels 501  
Of Xerxes' chariot. Yet what legions more  
Expand their mighty range? What banners still

The



Book III. L E O N I D A S. 81

The Malian sands o'ershadow ? Forward rolls  
The regal car through nations, which in arms, 505  
And order'd ranks unlike the eastern throng  
Upheld the spear and buckler. Yet untaught  
To bend the servile knee erect they stood ;  
Unless that mourning o'er the shameful weight 509  
Of their new bondage some their brows depress'd,  
And stain'd their arms with sorrow. Europe's race  
Were these, whom Xerxes by resistless force  
Had gather'd to his standards. Murm'ring here  
The sons of Thrace and Macedonia stood,  
Here on his steed the brave Thessalian frown'd: 515  
There pin'd reluctant multitudes, who bore  
The name of Greeks, and peopled all the coast  
Between Byzantium, and the Malian bay.

THROUGH all the numbers, which ador'd his  
pride,  
Or fear'd his pow'r, the monarch now was pass'd ;  
Nor yet among those myriads could be found 521  
One, who with Xerxes' self in tow'ring size,  
Or beauteous features might compare, possess'd

Of all but virtue; doom'd to shew how mean,  
 How weak without her is unbounded pow'r,      525  
 The charm of beauty, and the blaze of state,  
 How insecure of happiness, how vain.

Thou, who couldst mourn the common lot, which  
 heav'n

From none withholds; which oft to thousands proves  
 Their only refuge from a tyrant's rage;      530

And which by pining sickness, age, or pain  
 Becomes at last a soothing hope to all;

Thou, who couldst weep, that nature's gentle hand  
 Should lay her wearied offspring in the tomb,

Yet couldst remorseless from their peaceful seats      535  
 Lead half the nations in a clime unknown

To fall the victims of thy ruthless pride;

What didst thou merit from the injur'd world?

What suff'rings to compensate for the tears

Of Asia's mothers, for unpeopled realms,      540

And all this waste of nature? On his host

The king exulting bends his haughty sight,

When thus to Demaratus he began.

Now

Now, Demaratus, to thy soul recal

My father, great Darius, who receiv'd 545

Thy wandring steps expell'd their native home.

Ill would it then become thee to beguile

Thy benefactors, and the truth disguise.

Look back on all those thousands, and declare,

If yonder Grecians will oppose their march. 550

THE exile answer'd. Deem not, mighty lord,

I will deceive thy goodness by a tale

Forg'd for their glory, whose deluded minds

Perversely hearken'd to the slanderer's tongue;

Who forc'd me with unmerited disgrace 555

To tread the paths of banishment and woe.

Nor be the king offended, while I speak

The words of truth. The Spartans never fly.

HERE with contemptuous smiles the kings return'd.

Wilt thou, who once wert Lacedæmon's chief, 560

Encounter twenty Persians? Yet those Greeks

With greater disproportion must confront

Our host to morrow. Demaratus thus.

By single combat were the tryal vain,  
And vainer still by my unworthy sword, 565  
To prove the merit of united force,  
Which oft by military skill surmounts  
The strength of numbers. Nor in fields of war  
The Greeks excel by discipline alone, 569  
But from their manners. Grant thy ear, O king,  
The difference learn of Grecian bands, and thine.  
The flow'r, the bulwark of thy pow'rful host  
Are mercenaries. These are canton'd round  
Thy provinces. No fertile field demands  
Their painful hand to turn the fallow glebe. 575  
Them to the noon-day toil no harvest calls.  
The stubborn oak along the mountains brow  
Sinks not beneath their stroke. With careful eyes  
They mark not how the flocks, or heifers feed.  
To them, of wealth and all possessions void, 580  
The name of country with an empty sound  
Flies o'er the ear, nor warms their joyless hearts,  
Who share no country. Needy, yet with scorn  
Rejecting labour, wretched by their wants,  
Yet profligate through indolence, with limbs 585

Soft and enervate, and with minds corrupt;  
From misery, debauchery, and sloth  
Are these to battle drawn against a foe  
Inur'd to hardship, and the child of toil,  
Wont through the freezing show'r, and wintry storm  
O'er his own glebe the tardy ox to goad; 591  
Or in the sun's impetuous heat to glow  
Beneath the burden of the yellow sheaves:  
Whence on himself, on her, whose faithful arms  
Infold him joyful, and a num'rous race, 595  
Which glads his dwelling, plenty he bestows  
With independence; and when call'd to war  
For these his dearest comfort, and his care,  
And for the harvest promis'd to his toil,  
He lifts the shield, nor shuns unequal force. 600  
Such are the pow'rs of ev'ry state in Greece,  
One only breeds a race more warlike still,  
Ev'n those, who now defend that rocky pass,  
The sons of Lacedæmon. They untaught;  
To break the glebe, or bind the golden sheaves, 605  
To far severer labours are inur'd,  
Alone for war, their sole delight, and care.



From infancy to manhood are they form'd  
 To want, and danger, to th'unwholesome ground,  
 To winter watches, and inclement skies,                      610  
 To plunge through torrents, brave the tusky boar,  
 To arms, and wounds; an exercise of pain  
 So fierce and constant, that to them a camp  
 With all its hardships is the seat of rest,  
 And war itself remission from their toils.                      615

THEY words are folly, scornful here replied,  
 The Persian monarch. Does not freedom dweell  
 Among the Grecians? Therefore will they shun  
 Superiour foes, for whosoe'er is free  
 Will fly from danger; while the Persians know,  
 If from th'allotted station they retreat,                      621  
 The scourge awaits them, and my heavy wrath.

CONCEIVE not, Xerxes, Sparta's chief return'd,  
 The Grecians want an object, where to fix  
 Their eyes with rev'rence, and obedient dread.                      625  
 To them more awful than the name of king  
 To Asia's trembling millions is the law,

Whose

Whose sacred voice enjoins them to confront  
Unnumber'd foes, to vanquish, or to die.

IN silence now the banish'd king remain'd. 630  
While near the straits the chariot roll'd; it chanc'd,  
The Spartans then were station'd out on guard.  
These, in gymnastic exercise employ'd,  
Nor heed the monarch, nor his gaudy train;  
But tofs'd the spear, and whirl'd the rapid dart, 635  
Or met with adverse shields in single war,  
Or trooping swiftly rush'd on ev'ry side  
With ranks unbroken, and with equal feet:  
While others calm beneath their polish'd helms  
Drew down their hair, which hung in sable curls,  
And spread their necks with terrour. Xerxes here  
The exile questions. What do these intend, 642  
Who thus with careful hands adjust their hair?

To whom the Spartan. O imperial lord,  
Such is their custom, to adorn their heads, 645  
When with determin'd valour they present  
Their dauntless breasts before the jaws of death.

Bring down thy myriads all in glitt'ring steel,  
Arm, if thou canst, the gen'ral race of man;  
All, who possess the regions unexplor'd 650  
Beyond the Ganges, all, whose wand'ring steps  
Behind the Caspian range the Scythian wild,  
With those, who drink the secret fount of Nile,  
Yet to the breasts of Sparta's sons shall fear  
Be still a stranger. Thus with fervour spake 655  
The exil'd king, when gushing from his eyes  
Resistless grief o'erflow'd his cheek. Aside  
His head he turn'd, and wept in copious streams.  
The sad remembrance of his former state,  
His dignity, his greatness, and the sight 660  
Of those brave ranks, which thus unshaken stood  
And spread amazement through the world in arms,  
Excite those sorrows. Oft with eager eyes  
He views the godlike warriors, who beneath  
His standard once victorious fought, who call'd  
Him once their king and leader. Then again 666  
His head he bows with anguish, and bedews  
His breast with tears; in agony bemoans  
His faded honours, his illustrious name

Book III.      L E O N I D A S.      89

Forgotten now, his majesty defil'd      670

With exile and dependence. So, obscur'd

By creeping ivy, and by sordid moss,

Some lordly palace, or stupendous fane

Magnificent in ruin stands; where time      674

Wide-wasting from the nodding roof hath mow'd

The column down, and cleft the pond'rous dome.

Not unobserv'd by Hyperanthes mourn'd

Th' unhappy Spartan. Kindly to his own

The exile's hand he joins, and thus humane.

O Demaratus, this thy grief confirms,      680

How well the Greeks deserve thy gen'rous praise,

Who still repining dost their loss deplore,

Though cherish'd here with universal love.

But O let indignation in thy breast

Revive thy wrongs! then blest th'auspicious fate,

Which led thee far from calumny and fraud      687

To share the favour of the highest king.

As Demaratus with a grateful mind

Address'd himself to answer, Persia's king

Thus interrupted. Soon, as morning shines, 690  
Do thou Tigranes and Phraortes head  
The Medes and Saces. Bring those Grecians bound.  
This said, The monarch to his tent return'd.

*End of the third Book.*



# LEONIDAS.

## BOOK IV.

### The Argument.

*Leonidas rising by break of day commands a body of Arcadians, with the Thespians, and Plateans to be drawn out for battle in that part of Thermopylae, which lay under the Phocian wall, from whence he harangues them. The enemy approaches. Diomedon kills Tigranes in single combat. Both armies join battle. Dithyrambus kills Phraortes. The Persians, entirely defeated, are pursued with great slaughter by Diomedon and Dithyrambus to the extremity of the pass. The Grecian commanders after the pursuit retire for refreshment to a cave in the side of mount Oeta. Leonidas recalls them to the camp, and sends down fresh forces. Diomedon and Dithyrambus, with the Plateans,*  
are

*are permitted to continue in the field. By the advice of Diomedon the Grecians advance to the broadest part of Thermopylæ, where they form a line of thirty in depth, consisting of the Plataans, Mantinéans, Tegæans, Thebans, Corinthians, Phlians, and Mycenæans. The attack is renew'd with great violence by Hyperanthes, Abrocomes, and the principal Persian leaders at the head of some chosen troops.*

**L**ACONIA's leader with the morning rose,  
When thus to Alpheus. From Arcadia's  
bands

Select a thousand spears. To these unite  
The Thespians and Plataans. Range their lines  
Before the wall, which fortifies the pass: 5  
There close-imbodied will their might repulse  
The num'rous foe. Obedient to his will  
Th'appointed legions issuing from their tents  
With deep'ning ranks Leonidas inclose.  
So round their monarch in his stormy cave 10  
The winds assemble, from his sable throne  
When Æolus sends forth his dread command  
To

To swell the main, or heav'n with clouds deform,  
Or bend the forest from the mountain's brow.

The chief of Sparta from the rampart's height 15  
Thus to the fight the list'ning host inflames.

THIS day, O Grecians, countrymen, and friends,  
Your wives, your offspring, your paternal seats,  
Your fathers, country, liberty, and laws  
Have sent you hither, from your infant age 20  
Vers'd in the various discipline of Mars,  
Laborious, active, virtuous, brave, and free,  
To match your valour with ignoble foes  
In war unskilful, nature's basest dross,  
The foes of all utility and worth, 25  
And thence a monarch's mercenary slaves;  
With spirits broke by servitude and want,  
With limbs relax'd by sloth, and wanton ease,  
With minds debauch'd by vices, uninspir'd  
By all th' indearing cares in free-born hearts, 30  
Who cold and drooping fight without a cause,  
To whom defeat is neither grief, nor shame,  
Who seek no fruit from victory but spoil.

These

These are the flow'r of Asia's host. The rest,  
Who fill their boasted numbers, are a croud 35  
Forc'd from their dwellings to the bloody field,  
From whom till now with jealous care their lord  
Has still withheld the instruments of war.  
These are the people, taught with patient grief  
To bear the rapine, cruelty, and spurns 40  
Of Xerxes' mercenary bands, and pine  
In servitude to slaves. With terrou' sounds  
The trumpeter's clangor in their trembling ears.  
Unwonted loads, the buckler and the lance,  
Their hands sustain incumberd'd, and present 45  
The mockery of war.—But ev'ry eye  
Flames with impatient ardour, and your breasts  
Too long their swelling spirit have confin'd.  
Go then, ye sons of Liberty, and sweep  
These bondmen from the field. Resistless rend 50  
The glittering standard from their servile hands.  
Hurl to the ground their ignominious heads,  
The warrior's helm profaning. Think, the shades  
Of your forefathers rear their sacred brows  
Here to enjoy the glory of their sons. 55

He spake. Loud Pæans burst from all the host.  
With fierce reply unnumber'd shouts ascend  
From hostile nations thronging down the pass.  
Such is the roar of Ætna, when her mouth 59  
Displodes combustion from her sulph'rous depths,  
And blasts the smiles of nature. Dauntless stood  
In deep array before the Phocian wall  
The Greeks close-wedg'd with implicated shields,  
And spears protended, like the graceful range  
Of arduous elms, whose interwoven boughs 65  
Before some rural palace wide expand  
Their venerable umbrage to retard  
The North's impetuous wing. As o'er the main  
In lucid rows the rising waves reflect  
The sun's effulgence, so the Grecian helms 70  
Return'd his light, which o'er their convex  
pour'd,  
And scatter'd splendour on the dancing plumes.  
Down rush'd the foe. Exulting in the van  
Their haughty leader shakes his threatening lance;  
And frowns defiance. Bursting from his rank 75  
Diomedon with instant fury fac'd

Th'im-



Th'impending foes. Meantime he loudly calls  
Their chief Tigranes, whom he thus defies.

Now thou art met, Barbarian. Wouldst thou prove  
Thy actions equal to thy vaunts, command  
Thy troops to halt, while thou and I engage.

TIGRANES turning to the Persians spake.  
My friends and soldiers, check your ardent haste,  
While my strong lance yon Grecian's pride con-  
founds.

HE ceas'd. In dreadful opposition now  
Each combatant advanc'd. With sinewy hand  
They gripe their spears high-brandish'd. Thrice  
they drove  
With well-directed force the pointed steel  
At either's throat, and thrice their shields repel  
The destin'd wound. At length the eastern chief  
With all his pow'rs collected for the stroke  
His javelin rivets in the Grecian targe.  
Aside Diomedon inclines, and shuns

Approaching

Approaching fate. Then all his martial skill

Undaunted summons. His forsaken lance 95

Beside him cast, his falchion he unsheaths.

The blade descending on Tigranes' arm,

That instant struggling to redeem his spear,

The shiv'ring hand dislevers. Pale affright

Unmans the Persian, while his active foe 100

Full on his neck discharg'd the rapid sword,

And open'd wide the purple gates of life.

Low sinks Tigranes in eternal shade.

The conqueror bestrides the prostrate dead,

Then in the clotted ringlets of the hair 105

His hand intertwining from the bleeding trunk

The head disjoin'd, and whirl'd with sudden rage

Amid the hostile numbers. All with dread

Recoil, where'er the ghastly visage flew

In sanguine circles, and pursu'd its track 110

Of horror through the air. Not more amaz'd

A barb'rous nation, whom the chearful dawn

Of science ne'er illumin'd, view on high

A meteor waving with portentous blaze;

Where oft, as superstition vainly dreams; 115

Some dæmon sits amid the baneful fires,  
Dispersing plagues and desolation round.  
Awhile the stern Diomedon remains  
Triumphant o'er the dire dismay, which froze  
The hearts of Persia; then with haughty port, 120  
And fullen joy among his gladsome friends  
Resumes his station. Still the Asian bands  
With consternation motionless behold  
Their foes with terror, and suspend the fight;  
When thus Phraortes animates their breasts. 125

HEAV'NS! can one leader's death appal this host,  
Which counts a train of monarchs for its chiefs!  
Behold Phraortes! from Imaüs' ridge  
I draw my subject files. With hardy toil  
I through the pathless forest have explor'd 130  
The tiger's cavern. This unconquer'd arm  
Hath from the lion rent the shaggy spoil.  
So through this field of slaughter will I chase  
Yon vaunting Greek with ruin on his head  
For great Tigranes slain. His words revive 135  
The flame of valour through the drooping van,  
Then

Then on the rear he brandishes his lance.  
 Before him shrink th'affrighted croud, and roll  
 Their numbers headlong on the Grecian steel  
 With loose arrangement, and uncertain feet. 140  
 Thus with his trident ocean's angry god  
 From its vast bottom turns the hideous mass  
 Of waters upward, and o'erwhelms the beach,  
 Terrific stood the fierce Platæan chief  
 Amid the Grecian van. His ample targe, 145  
 Like a strong bulwark, prominent he rais'd  
 Before the line. There thunder'd all the storm  
 Of darts and arrows. His undaunted train  
 With emulating ardour charge the foe.  
 Where'er they turn the formidable spears, 150  
 Which drench'd the glebe of Marathon with gore,  
 The Persians heap the plain. Diomedon  
 Leads on the slaughter. From his nodding crest  
 The sable plumes shook terror. Asia's bands  
 All shudder backward at the dreadful beams 155  
 Of that unconquerable sword, which falls  
 With lightning's swiftness o'er their trimbling heads,  
 And reeking still with slain Tigranes' blood

Their shatter'd ranks o'erturns. The furious chief,  
Incompas'd round with carnage, and besmear'd 160  
With sanguine drops, inflames his warlike friends.

O DITHYRAMBUS! let thy deeds this day  
Surmount their wonted lustre! Thou in arms,  
Demophilus, worn grey, thy youth recal!  
Behold these slaves without resistance bleed. 165  
Advance, my ancient friend. Propitious fame  
Smiles on thy years, and gives thy aged hand  
To pluck fresh laurels for thy honour'd brow.

As, when indu'd with Promethéan heat,  
The molten clay respir'd; with sudden warmth  
So glows the venerable Thespian's age, 171  
With new-born vigour ev'ry sinew swells.  
His falchion thund'ring on Cherasmes' helm  
The forehead clove. Ecbatana to war  
Sent forth Cherasmes. From her potent gates 175  
He proud in hope her swarming numbers led,  
With 'Ariazus and Peucestes join'd,  
His martial brothers. They attend his doom

By



Book IV.      L E O N I D A S.      101

By Dithyrambus foil'd. Their hoary fire  
Shall o'er his solitary palace roam,      180  
Lamenting loud his childless years, and curse  
Ambition's fury, and the lust of war,  
Then pining bow with anguish to the grave.  
Next by the fierce Plataean's matchless sword  
Expires Damates, once the host and friend      185  
Of fall'n Tigranes; him that day he join'd,  
And left his native bands. Of Syrian birth  
In Daphne he resided near the grove,  
Whose hospitable laurels in their shade  
Conceal'd the virgin fugitive, that scorn'd      190  
Th' embrace of Phœbus; hither she repair'd  
Far from her parent stream, in fables feign'd  
Herself a laurel to have rear'd her head  
With verdant bloom in this retreat, the grove  
Of Daphne call'd, the seat of rural bliss,      195  
Fan'd by the wing of zephirs, and with rills  
Of bubbling founts irriguous, Syria's boast,  
And happy rival of Theſſalia's vale;  
Now hid for ever from Damates' eyes.  
Nor with unactive spears th' Arcadians stood.      200

Gigantic Clonius unresisted press'd  
 The yielding Persians, who before him sunk,  
 Crush'd like vile stubble underneath the steps  
 Of some glad hind, who visits o'er the plain  
 His new-thorn harvest. - With a fearless eye 205  
 Phraortes saw the gen'ral rout. He sprung  
 O'er hills of carnage to confront the Greeks,  
 Reproaching thus his own inglorious friends,

FLY then, ye cowards, and desert your chief;  
 Yet single here my falchion shall oppose 210  
 The might of thousands. Raging thus he drove  
 The deathful steel through Aristander's breast,  
 Him Dithyrambus lov'd, a sacred bard  
 Rever'd for justice, for his verse renown'd,  
 Which sung the deeds of heroes, those, who fell, 215  
 Or those, who conquer'd in their country's cause,  
 Th' inraptur'd soul inflaming with the thirst  
 Of glory won by virtue. His high strain  
 The Muses favour'd from their neighb'ring groves,  
 And bless'd with heav'nly melody his lyre. 220  
 No more from Thespia shall his feet ascend

The

The shady sheep of Helicon. No more  
 The streams divine of Aganippe's fount  
 His tuneful lip shall moisten, nor his hands  
 Present their off'rings in the Muses bow'r,      225

The prostrate shield and unforfaken lance  
 Now feebly grasping, never more to swell  
 His lofty numbers on the sounding string.  
 Lo! Dithyrambus weeps. Amid the rage  
 Of war and conquest a swift-gushing tear      230  
 Finds one sad moment's interval to fall

On his pale friend. But soon the victor proves  
 His fierce revenge. Through shield and corselet  
 plung'd,

His furious javelin tore the Persian's chest.      235

Phraortes sinks, nor yet expiring, sees

With indignation Persia's myriads fly.

Swift through their broken legions, side by side,

Urg'd by the voice of Victory and Fame,

Diomedon and Dithyrambus rang'd.      240

So, where Alphæus heard the rattling car,

And sounding hoofs along his echoing banks,

Two gen'rous coursers link'd in mutual reins

With equal speed and ardour beat the dust  
To reach the glories of th' Olympic goal. 245

THIS from his lofty chariot Xerxes saw.  
He saw his numbers pouring from the straits  
In crouded flight, then spreading o'er the field,  
All broke and scatter'd; as a river bursts  
Impetuous from its fountain, then expands 250  
Its limpid surface o'er the pastures broad.  
Thrice started from his seat th' astonish'd king,  
Shame, fear, and indignation rend his breast;  
As ruin irresistible were near  
To overwhelm his millions. Haste (he calls 255  
To Hyperanthes) haste, and meet the Greeks;  
Their daring rage and insolence repel,  
And from dishonour vindicate our name.

THE godlike Hyperanthes through the tents  
Obedient moves. Deliberate and brave 260  
Each active prince he summons, and with care  
Collects the hardiest troops. Around him soon  
Innumerable javelins flame. His voice  
Demands attention, when he thus began.

Now,

Book IV. LEONIDAS. 105

Now, friends, divide, and form two equal bands.  
One with the great Abrocomes, with me, 266  
With Intaphernes, and Hydarnes bold,  
With Mindus and Pandates shall advance,  
And snatch this short-liv'd victory from Greece.  
You Abradates with Pharnuchus join'd, 270  
Orontes, and Mazæus, keep the rest  
Imbattled ready to impart their aid,  
Shou'd envious Fate exhaust our num'rous ranks;  
For, O great Mithra, may thy radiant eye  
Ne'er see us, yielding to ignoble flight, 275  
The Persian fame dishonour, and the praise  
Of our renown'd progenitors, who led  
By Cyrus gave a monarch to the world.  
Think, O ye princes, flow'r of Asia's realms,  
What endless infamy will blast your names, 280  
Should Greece, that narrow portion of the globe,  
Your arms defy; when Babylon hath low'r'd  
Its tow'ring head, when Lydia's pride is quell'd,  
And from Ecbatana its empire torn.  
Think too, ye warlike bands, our army's boast, 285  
What deeds are ask'd from your superiour swords;



You, who our monarch's largest bounty share,  
 You, to whose faith and valour he commits      288  
 Himself, his queens, his realms, and now his fame.

WHILE Hyperanthes marshall'd thus his host  
 Far as th' eytremest limit of the pass,  
 Diomedon and Dithyrambus hung  
 Upon the rear of Persia. Now they turn'  
 Victorious, striding o'er th' impurpled heaps      294  
 Of arms, and mangled dead, themselves with gore  
 Distain'd; like two grim tigers, who have forc'd  
 A nightly mansion on the desert rais'd  
 By some lone-wandering traveller, and, dy'd  
 With human slaughter, through the forest deep  
 Back to their covert's dreary gloom retire.      300  
 So pass'd these heroes e'er the crimson rock,  
 Approaching now, where gasping on his shield  
 Phraortes lay recumbent. Thespia's youth  
 Advancing, thus his gen'rous soul express'd.

LIv'st thou, brave Persian? By propitious Jove,  
 From whom the pleasing sense of mercy flows      306  
 Through

Through mortal bosoms, less my soul rejoic'd,  
When fortune gave the victory before,  
Than now to raise thee from this field of death.

THE dying prince his languid sight unclos'd, 310  
And thus with trembling lips. Vain man, forbear  
To proffer me, what soon thyself must crave.  
The day is now extinguish'd in these orbs,  
Nor shall my heart beat longer than to scorn  
Thy mercy, Grecian; then resign to fate.    315

HE ceas'd. The great, and haughty spirit fled.  
Demophilus drew nigh. The hoary chief  
Long o'er Phraortes' corse his head inclin'd,  
Pois'd on his lance, and thus address'd the slain.

ALAS! how glorious were that bleeding breast,  
Had Justice giv'n the buckler to thy arm,    321  
And to preserve a people bade thee die!  
Who now shall mourn thee! Thy ungrateful king  
Will soon forget thy worth. Thy native land  
For thee no sumptuous monument shall raise

Of public sorrow; thy recorded name 326  
No sighs among thy countrymen shall wake  
For their lost hero: what to them avail'd  
Thy might and dauntless spirit? Not to guard  
Their wives and offspring from the spoil of war,  
Not from their walls repel the hostile blaze, 331  
Nor desolation from their fruitful fields,  
But to extend oppression didst thou fall;  
Perhaps with inborn virtues in thy heart,  
Which, but thy angry destiny forbade, 335  
By freedom cherish'd might have bless'd mankind.  
All-bounteous Nature! thy impartial laws  
To no selected race of men confine  
The sense of glory, fortitude, and all  
The nobler passions, which inspire the mind, 340  
And render life illustrious. These thou plant'st  
In ev'ry soil. But freedom, like the sun,  
Must warm the gen'rous seeds. By her alone  
They bloom and flourish; while oppression blasts  
The tender virtues: hence a spurious growth 345  
False honour, savage valour taint the soul,  
And wild ambition: hence rapacious pow'r

The

The ravag'd earth unpeoples, and the brave,  
A feast for dogs, bestrew th'infanguin'd plain.

He said.    Around the venerable man      350  
The Grecians throng'd attentive. Conquest hush'd  
Its joyful transports. O'er the horrid field,  
Late the rude scene of tumult, all was calm.  
So, when the song of Thracian Orpheus drew  
To Hebrus' margin from their dreary seats      355  
The savage race, which Hæmus wrapt in clouds,  
Pangæus cold, and Rhodopeian snows  
In blood and discord nurs'd; the soothing strain  
Flow'd with enchantment thro' their ravish'd ears:  
Their fierceness melted, and amaz'd they learn'd  
The sacred laws of justice, which the bard      361  
Mix'd with the musick of his heav'nly string.

Not from the field of slaughter for remote  
In Oeta's rugged side had nature clove  
A rocky cavern. This with moss she spread,      365  
And o'er the entrance downward from the roots  
She hung the shaggy trunks of branching firs

To

To heav'n's hot ray impervious, From the sides  
 The vivid laurel spread before the sun,  
 Its broad and glitt'ring foliage; and, above, 370  
 The hill was darken'd with a solemn shade  
 Cast from the sable cypress. This retreat  
 Cool, as the grot of Thetis, hid beneath  
 The vaulted ocean, with the murm'ring sound  
 Of waters trickling from the riven stone 375  
 The Grecian leaders to its gloom invites.  
 Their helms they loosen from their glowing cheeks,  
 Against the rock their bucklers they repose.  
 Propt on their spears they stood, when Agis thus,  
 Sent by Leonidas, accosts the chiefs. 380

O EVER-WORTHY of undying names!  
 Leonidas recals you from your toil,  
 Which has already fill'd our mouths with praise,  
 Our eyes with wonder, that from yonder tow'r  
 On your unequall'd deeds incessant gaz'd 385

To whom the bold Diomedon return'd.  
 Go Agis, say to Lacedæmon's king,

As



As yet untir'd my hand can poise the spear,  
Nor hangs the buckler heavy on my arm.  
And shall I then retire? And once again 390  
Shall not the sun, before he sink, behold  
The slaves of Xerxes tremble at my lance?

To him the Thespian youth. My friend and  
guide

To noble actions, since thy gen'rous mind  
Intent on fame disdains to rest, O grant, 395  
I too thy glorious labours may partake,  
And learn once more to imitate thy deeds.  
Thou, gentlest Agis, Sparta's chief intreat  
Not to command us from the field of war.

THEN interpos'ed Demophilus. O friend, 400  
And thou, lov'd offspring of the dearest man,  
Who dost restore my brother to my eyes,  
My soul your magnanimity applauds.  
But, O reflect, that unabating toil 404  
Subdues the mightiest. Valour then will sigh,  
When the weak hand obeys the heart no more.  
Yet I declining with the weight of years

Will

Will not assign a measure to your strength;  
If still you find your vigour undecay'd,  
Stay and augment your glory. So, when time' 410  
Your heads shall whiten, and your feeble arms  
Round the high temple's peaceful vault have hung  
Their consecrated shields, your native land  
Shall then with honours doubled on your age  
Requite the gen'rous labours of your prime. 415  
So spake the senior, and forsook the cave.

Now from the bubbling spring Diomedon  
Receives the waters in his concave helm;  
And thus address'd the genius of the flood.

WHOE'ER thou art, whose deity presides 420  
O'er this fair fountain, bounteous are thy streams;  
Though ill shall I repay thee: for again  
Will I this day pollute thy silver wave,  
Which mix'd with gore shall tinge the Malian surge.

So saying from his brimming casque he quaff'd  
The clear, refreshing moisture. Thus repairs 426  
The

Book IV.      L E O N I D A S.      113

The spotted panther to Hydaspes' side,  
 Or eastern Indus, feasted with the blood  
 Of some torn deer, which nigh his cruel grasp  
 Had roar'd unheeding through the secret grove;  
 Rapacious o'er the humid brink he stoops,      431  
 And in the pure and fluid crystal cools—  
 His reeking jaws. The Thespian warrior here.

SEE, valiant friend, Leonidas hath fill'd  
 The pass with fresh battalions. O survey      435  
 Yon line of plumed helms, and glitt'ring shields,  
 Which emulate the mid-day sun. What joy!  
 What ardent hope enlightens ev'ry face!  
 O let us wait no longer, lest they cry,  
 Our wearied limbs retard us. Let us arm,      440  
 And take our station in the glorious van.

THUS Dithyrambus. The Platæan chief  
 Approves the counsel, and resumes his arms,  
 Them as a splendid recompense he bore  
 From grateful Athens, when his conqu'ring sword  
 Her domes with great Miltiades redeem'd.      446

From Asiatic flames. Th' insculptur'd helm  
 Now press'd his manly temples. From on high  
 A fourfold plumage nodded, and, beneath,  
 A golden dragon with effulgent scales      450  
 The gorgeous crest illumin'd. On his arm  
 His shield he brac'd. Gorgonian serpents twin'd  
 Around the spacious verge. Within, the form  
 Of Pallas, martial goddess, was impress'd.  
 Low, as her feet, the graceful tunic flow'd.      455  
 Betwixt two griffins on her helmet sat  
 A sphynx with wings expanded, while the face  
 Of dire Medusa on her bosom frown'd.  
 One hand supports her javelin, which confounds  
 The pride of kings; the other leads along      460  
 A blooming virgin, Victory, whose brows  
 A crown incircles; laurels she presents;  
 But from her shoulders all her plumes were shorn,  
 With favour'd Athens ever now to rest.  
 This, Asia's terrour, on his mighty arm      465  
 Diomedon uprear'd, then snatch'd his lance,  
 And thus to Dithyrambus, Lo! my friend,  
 Alone of all the Grecians, who sustain'd

Book IV.    L E O N I D A S.    115

The morning's battle, still unwearied stand  
Plataea's sons, and well may keep the field,    470  
They, who endur'd the Marathonian toil.  
Then charge with us. Amid the foremost rank  
Thy valour shall be plac'd, and share, this day,  
Command and honours with Plataea's chief.    474

THE hero ceas'd, and tow'rd the Grecian van  
Strides with impetuous steps. Nor slow behind  
The boast of Thespia, Dithyrambus, mov'd;  
Like blooming Hermes in celestial arms,  
When lightly graceful with his feather'd feet  
Along Scamander's flow'ry verge he pass'd,    480  
To aid th' incens'd divinities of Greece  
Against the Phrygian tow'rs. With eager speed  
The heroes soon th'imbattled Greeks attain'd,  
To whom the brave Diomedon began.

NOT to contend, but vanquish are you come,  
And in the blood of fugitives to stain    486  
Your lances unoppos'd. My friends, behold,  
Where furthest from the Malian gulf remov'd



The crags of Oeta less confine the straits.

There let us bend extending wide our front. 490

There with more ample scope may havoc range.

ALL with assent gave ear. The various bands  
Move on successive. The Plataans first  
Against the rock are station'd. To their head  
Is Dithyrambus brought. Exulting joy 495  
Diffends their hearts, and flashes in their eyes.  
Thanks to the great Diomedon, they cry,  
Who to our troop this godlike hero joins.  
Hail! Dithyrambus. Hail! illustrious chief.  
Well dost thou merit to have reap'd renown 500  
At Marathon. Amid the glorious front  
With conscious gladness blushing on his cheek  
The youth his post assumes. Around him croud  
The hoary warriors their unnumber'd scars  
Before his sight presenting, and recount 505  
Their various dangers. He their wounds surveys  
With veneration, nor disdains to hear  
The oft-repeated tale. From Sparta's king  
Returning, Agis here the chiefs address'd.

Leonidas

Book IV.      L E O N I D A S.      117

Leonidas permits you still to brave      510

The hostile numbers, with Plataea's band,

If yet by toil unconquer'd. But I see,

That all unwearied ask the promis'd fight.

Hail! glorious veterans. This signal day

May your victorious swords augment the wreaths

Around your venerable brows, and make      516

Thermopylae, like Marathon, renown'd.

THIS said, he hastens back. Meantime advanc'd  
The Mantinée, Diophrantus brave,

And Hegesander, Tegea's dauntless chief,      520

With all their troops imbattled; by their side

The Thebans form; to them their native files

Alcmaeon and Eupalamus unite;

Last on the margin of the Malian bay

Mycenæ's youth Aristobulus drew;      525

In one impenetrable phalanx stretch'd

Across the pass. With close-connected force

An hundred warriors form'd th' expanded ranks,

And thirty bucklers ev'ry file condens'd.

In strong reserve Dieneces behind      530

Dispos'd the Spartans, and the Locrian line.  
 There too with Maron Alpheus dauntless stood,  
 And godlike Agis. There Megistias plac'd  
 His blooming heir, and thus his valour fires.

O MENALIPPUS! born of foreign race, 535  
 Yet by these heroes not unworthy deem'd  
 With them to fight for Sparta! lo! the hour  
 Is come, my son, to shew thy gen'rous heart;  
 That not with thee the buckler and the spear  
 Are ill intrusted to maintain a cause 540  
 So great and sacred. O remember well,  
 Leonidas on yonder bulwark stands,  
 Who all the war contemplates, and discerns  
 The bold and fearful. O propitious heav'n!  
 Grant me to hear Leonidas this day 545  
 Applaud my son, and let Megistias die!

WHILE thus he spake, the animated soul  
 Of Menalippus struggling in his breast  
 Demands the fight. This saw the tender fire,  
 And thus with tears rejoin'd. Remember too! 550

Thy

Book IV.      L E O N I D A S.      119

Thy father sees thy danger. Oh! my child!  
To me thy honour as to thee is dear;  
Yet court not death! By all thy filial love,  
By all my cares and fondness I implore!  
Amid the combat, or the warm pursuit, 555  
Still by the wife Dieneces abide:  
His prudent valour knows th' unerring paths  
Of glory; he will guide thy youthful steps.  
This said, to Sparta's leader he retires.

Now are the enemies descried. The van 560  
Abrocomes and Hyperanthes led,  
With them Pandates, Intaphernes proud,  
Hydarnes, Mindus. Violent their march  
With founding footsteps swept the stony way.  
So, where th' unequal globe in mountains swells,  
A river pours its thund'ring surge between 566  
The steep-erected cliffs; tumultuous roll  
The torrents bursting o'er the pointed crags:  
The mountains roar, the marble channel foams.  
With obvious arms th' intrepid Greeks withstand  
The dire encounter. Soon th' impetuous shock 571

Of thousands and of myriads shakes the ground.

Stupendous scene of terrour! Under hills,

Whose nodding summits vaulted o'er their heads,

In unextinguishable fury join'd 575

The dreadful conflict. With inverted trunks

Obliquely bending from the shagged ridge

The sylvan horrors overshade the fight.

The shrill-mouth'd trumpet, and the deep-tun'd  
horn,

Mix'd with the crash of intermingling spears, 580

The clanging shields, and war's discordant shouts

Awake the echoes through the neighb'ring groves;

And rocks and shores return the hideous sound.

*End of the fourth Book.*



# LEONIDAS.

## BOOK V.

### The Argument.

*Hyperanthes discontinuing the fight, while he waits for reinforcements, Teribazus, a Persian remarkable for his merit and learning, and highly belov'd by Hyperanthes, but unhappy in his passion for Ariana, a daughter of Darius, advances from the rest of the army to the rescue of a friend in distress, who lay wounded on the field of battle. Teribazus is attack'd by Diophantus, the Mantinéan, whom he overcomes, then engaging with Dithyrambus, is himself slain. Hyperanthes hastens to his succour. A general battle ensues. Hyperanthes and Abrocomes, partly by their own valour, and partly by the perfidy of the Thebans, who desert the line, being on the point of forcing the Grecians, are repuls'd by the Lacedæmonians. Hyperanthes com-*

*poses a select body out of the Persian standing forces, and making an improvement in their discipline renews the attack; upon which Leonidas changes the disposition of his army: Hyperanthes and the ablest Persian generals are driven out of the field, and several thousands of the Barbarians, circumvented in the pass, are entirely destroy'd.*

**A**MID the van of Persia was a youth  
 Nam'd Teribazus, not for golden stores,  
 Not for wide pastures travers'd o'er with herds,  
 With bleating thousands, or with bounding steeds,  
 Nor yet for pow'r, nor splendid honours fam'd. 5  
 Rich was his mind in ev'ry art divine,  
 And through the paths of science had he walk'd  
 The votary of wisdom. In the years,  
 When tender down invests the ruddy cheek,  
 He with the Magi turn'd the hallow'd page 10  
 Of Zoroastres; then his tow'ring soul  
 High on the plumes of contemplation soard,  
 And from the lofty Babylonian fane  
 With learn'd Chaldeans trac'd the mystic sphere;  
 There number'd o'er the vivid fires, that gleam 15

Upon

Upon the dusky bosom of the night,  
 Nor on the sands of Ganges were unheard  
 The Indian sages from sequester'd bow'rs,  
 While, as attention wonder'd, they disclos'd  
 The pow'rs of nature; whether in the woods, 20  
 The fruitful glebe, or flow'r, or healing plant,  
 The limpid waters, or the ambient air,  
 Or in the purer element of fire.  
 The fertile plains, where great Sesostris reign'd,  
 Mysterious Ægypt, next the youth survey'd 25  
 From Elephantis, where impetuous Nile  
 Precipitates his waters, to the sea,  
 Which for below receives the sev'nfold stream.  
 Thence o'er th' Ionic coast he stray'd, nor pass'd  
 Milétus by, which once inraptur'd heard 30  
 The tongue of Thales, nor Priene's walls,  
 Where wisdom dwelt with Bias, nor the seat  
 Of Pittacus along the Lesoian shore  
 Here too melodious numbers charm'd his ear,  
 Which flow'd from Orpheus, and Musæus old, 35  
 And thee, O father of immortal verse,  
 Mæonides, whose strains through ev'ry age

Time with his own eternal lip shall sing.  
Back to his native Susa then he turn'd  
His wandring steps. His merit soon was dear 40  
To Hyperanthes generous and good.  
And Ariana from Darius sprung  
With Hyperanthes, of th' imperial race,  
Which rul'd th' extent of Asia, in disdain  
Of all her greatness oft an humble ear 45  
To him would bend, and listen to his voice.  
Her charms, her mind, her virtue he explor'd  
Admiring. Soon was admiration chang'd  
To love, nor lov'd he sooner, than despair'd.  
But unreveal'd and silent was his pain; 50  
Nor yet in solitary shades he roam'd,  
Nor shun'd resort: but o'er his sorrows cast  
A sickly dawn of gladness, and in smiles  
Conceal'd his anguish; while the secret flame  
Rag'd in his bosom, and its peace consum'd: 55  
His heart still brooding o'er these mournful thoughts.

CAN I, O wisdom, seek relief from thee,  
Who dost approve my passion? From the pow'r

Of

Of beauty only thou wouldst guard my heart.

But here thy self art charm'd, where softness, grace,

40 And ev'ry virtue dignify desire; 61

Yet thus to love despairing is to prove

The sharpest sorrow, which relentless Fate

Can from her store of woes inflict on life:

But dost not thou this moment warn my soul 65

5 To fly the fatal charmer? Do I pause?

Back to the wise Chaldeans will I go,

Or wander on the Ganges; where to heav'n

With thee my elevated soul shall tow'r,

With thee the secrets of the earth unveil. 70

There no tumultuous passion shall molest

My tranquil hours, and ev'ry thought be calm.

O wretched Teribazus! all conspires

Against thy peace. Our mighty lord prepares

To overwhelm the Grecians. Ev'ry youth 75

Attends the war, and I, who late have pois'd

With no inglorious arm the soldier's lance,

And near the side of Hyperanthes fought,

Must join the throng. How therefore can I fly

From Ariana! who with Asia's queens 80

The



The splendid camp of Xerxes will adorn.  
Then be it so. Again I will adore  
Her gentle virtue. Her delightful tongue,  
Her graceful sweetness shall again diffuse  
Resistless magic through my ravish'd heart; 83  
And thus when love with double rage inflam'd  
Swells to distraction in my tortur'd breast,  
Then—But in vain through darkness do I search  
My fate: despair and fortune be my guides.

THE hour arriv'd, when Xerxes first advanc'd  
His arms from Susa's gates. The Persian dames 91  
(So were accusom'd all the eastern fair)  
In sumptuous care accompanied his march;  
And Ariana grac'd the beauteous train.  
From morn till ev'ning Teribazus guards 95  
Her passing wheels; his arm her weight sustains  
With trembling pleasure often, as she mounts  
Th' imperial chariot; his assiduous hand  
From each pure fountain wafts the living flood:  
Nor seldom by the fair-one's soft command 100  
Would he repose him at her feet reclin'd,

While

While o'er his lips her lovely forehead bow'd,  
 Won with his grateful eloquence, that sooth'd  
 With sweet variety the tedious march,  
 Beguiling time. He too would then forget 105  
 His cares awhile, in raptures vain intranc'd,  
 Delusion all, and fleeting rays of joy  
 Roon overcast with more intense despair;  
 Like wintry clouds, which op'ning for a time  
 Tinge their black skirts with scatter'd beams of day;  
 Then swiftly closing, on the brows of Morn 111  
 Condense their horrors, and in thickest gloom  
 The ruddy beauty veil. Such woes oppress'd  
 The Persian's heart, not soften'd; for this day  
 His daring valour from the bleeding van 115  
 Oppos'd the frown of adamantin Mars.  
 With no tiara were his temples bound,  
 The slender lance of Asia he disdain'd,  
 And her light target. Eminent he mov'd  
 In Grecian arms the wonder of his foes. 120  
 Among th' Ionians had his strenuous limbs  
 In war been practic'd. A resplendent cask  
 Flam'd on his head. Before his face and chest  
 Down

Down to the knees his ample shield was spread,  
A pond'rous ash with skilful hands he grasp'd. 125  
Thus arm'd, tremendous in the front he stood,  
Beneath his might two bold Phliasians died,  
And three Tegéans, whose indignant chief,  
Brave Hegesander, vengeance breath'd in vain  
With streaming wounds repuls'd. Thus far un  
match'd 130

His strength prevail'd, when Hyperanthes' voice  
Recall'd his fainting legions. Now each band  
Their languid courage reinforc'd with rest.  
Mean time with Teribazus thus confer'd  
The godlike prince. Thou much deserving youth!  
O had thy deeds with emulation warm'd 136  
The frozen hearts of Persia, Greece had wept  
Her prostrate ranks, not triumph'd in our shame.  
Relaxing now the wearied fight I wait,  
Till from the camp with Abradates strong 140  
The brave Pharnuchus and Mazæus move,  
And with fresh pow'rs renew the drooping war.  
For since surpass'd in valour, we must waste  
By endless numbers, and continual toil  
The matchless ardour of our gallant foes. 145

He said. Immers'd in sadness scarce replied,  
But to himself thus plain'd the am'rous youth.

STILL do I languish mourning o'er the same,  
My arm acquires. O wretched heart! thou seat  
Of constant sorrow, what deceitful smiles      150  
Yet canst thou borrow from illusive hope  
To flatter life. At Ariana's feet  
What if with supplicating knees I bow'd,  
Implor'd her pity, and reveal'd my love?  
Wretch, canst thou climb to yon effulgent orb,      155  
And share the splendours which irradiate heav'n?  
Dost thou aspire to that exalted maid,  
Great Xerxes' sister, rivalling the hopes  
Of Asia's purpled potentates and kings?  
Unless within her bosom I inspir'd      160  
A passion fervent as my own, nay more,  
Such as might dissipate each virgin fear,  
And unrestrain'd disclose its fond desire,  
My hopes are fruitless. Plung'd in black despair  
Me thus revolv'd, when suddenly the cries      165  
Of Aribæus smote his pensive ear.

By mutual danger, and by friendship join'd,  
They had been long companions in the toils  
Of war. Together with victorious steps  
The sons of Nile they chac'd, when Ægypt's pride  
Before the arms of Hyperanthes fell. 171  
Stretch'd on the plain, and cover'd o'er with wounds,  
By all abandon'd, Teribazus views  
His gallant friend. His languid soul awakes,  
And forth he issues from the Persian line. 175  
The bleeding warrior in his strong embrace  
Swift he conveys. By indignation fir'd  
Fierce from the Grecians Diophantus rush'd  
With loud defiance. Teribazus leaves  
His rescu'd friend. His massy targe he rears, 180  
Advances high his formidable spear,  
And turns intrepid on th' approaching foe.  
Amazement follow'd. On he strode, and skook  
The plumed honours of his shining crest.  
Th' ill-fated Greek awaits th' unequal fight; 185  
Pierc'd in the throat with sounding arms he falls;  
Through ev'ry hand the Mantinéans mourn.  
Upon the slain the victor fix'd his sight,

And



And thus reflected. By thy splendid arms  
 Thou art a Greek of no ignoble rank,  
 And from thy fall perhaps am I adorn'd  
 With more conspicuous lustre. What if heav'n  
 Should add new victims, like thyself, to grace  
 My undeserving hand, who knows, but she  
 Might smile upon my trophies. Oh! vain thought!  
 Disperse, ye fantome hopes! Too long, my heart,  
 Hast thou in vain contended with thy woes!  
 I stand this moment on the verge of life,  
 By fame invited, by despair impell'd  
 To pass th' irremeable bound. No more  
 Shall Teribazus backward turn his steps,  
 But here decide his fate. Then beat no more,  
 Thou troubled heart, and ev'ry grief be still  
 Now at th' approach of everlasting peace.

He ended, when a mighty foe drew nigh;  
 Not less than Dithyrambus. E'er they join'd,  
 The Persian thus the Thespian youth address'd.  
 Say, art not thou th' unconquerable Greek,  
 Whose dauntless valour mow'd our battle down,

And scatter'd nations? To attempt thy force 210  
This day I purpos'd, when our chiefs from fight  
Their host withdrew? That now my single arm  
Thou deign'st to meet, receive my thanks; and  
know,  
The thought of conquest less employs my mind,  
Than that by thee I cannot fall with shame. 215

He ceas'd. These words the Thespian chief re-  
turn'd.

Of all the praises from thy gen'rous mouth  
The only share, which justice bids me claim,  
Is, that I here adventure to confront 219  
Thy matchless strength. Believe not, that unmark'd  
Were thy great deeds. From yon unbounded camp  
None yet hath equall'd thy victorious hand.  
But whence thy armour of the Grecian form?  
Whence thy tall spear? thy helmet? whence the  
weight  
Of that strong shield unlike thy eastern friends? 225  
O if thou be'st some fugitive, who, lost  
To liberty and virtue, art become

A tyrant's vile stipendiary; with grief  
That valour, thus triumphant, I behold,  
Which after all its danger, and brave toil 230  
Deserves no honour from the Gods, or men.

HERE Teribazus with a sigh return'd.

I am to Greece a stranger, and a wretch  
To thee unknown, who seek, this hour, to die;  
Though not ignobly, but in death to raise 235  
My name from darkness, while I end my woes.

THE Grecian then. I view thee, and I mourn.

A dignity, which virtue only bears,  
And resolution on thy brow enthron'd  
(Though grief hath dim'd thy drooping eye) demand  
My veneration; and whatever be 241  
The malice of thy fortune, what the cares,  
Which thus infest thy quiet, they create  
Within my breast the pity of a friend:  
Why hast thou then compell'd me to oppose 245  
My arm against thee, while thy might supports  
Th' unjust ambition of malignant kings,

The foes to virtue, liberty, and peace?  
Yet free from rage, or enmity I lift  
My adverse javelin. Victory I ask, 250  
Thy life may fate for happier hours reserve.

THIS said, their beaming lances they pretend,  
Of hostile hate, or fury both devoid;  
As on the Isthmian, or Olympic sand  
For fame alone contending. Either host 255  
Pois'd on their spears in silent wonder gaz'd.  
The fight begins, when soon the Grecian lance,  
Which all the day in constant battle worn  
Unnumber'd shields and corselets had transfix'd,  
Against the Persian target, shiv'ring breaks, 260  
Its master's hand disarming. Then began  
The sense of honour, and the dread of shame  
To swell in Dithyrambus. Undismay'd  
He grapples with the foe, and instant seiz'd  
The threatening javelin, e'er th'uplifted arm 265  
Could execute the meditated wound.  
The weapon burst betwixt their struggling hands.  
They loose their grasp, and bare their shining swords.

With

With equal swiftness to defend, or charge,  
Each active youth advances, or recedes. 270

On ev'ry side they traverse, now direct,  
Obliquely now the wheeling blades descend.

Still is the conflict dubious, when the Greek  
Dissembling points his falchion to the earth,  
His arm depress'd, as overcome with toil; 275

While with his buckler cautious he repels

The blows repeated from th' exulting foe. 280

Greece trembles for her hero. Joy pervades

The Asian ranks, and Hyperanthes strides

Before the line; preparing to receive 285

His friend triumphant. Teribazus now

Press'd with redoubled efforts. Still the Greek 290

Sustains th' assault defensive, and at last,

As with unguarded fury of his strokes

Th' unwary Persian sideways swung his targe, 285

The fatal moment Dithyrambus watch'd,

And darting forward with his feet outstretch'd,

His falchion buries in th' obnoxious side.

Affection, grief, and terrouer wing the speed

Of Hyperanthes. From his bleeding foe 290



The Greek retires, not distant, and awaits  
 The eastern prince. But he with wat'ry cheeks,  
 And dumb with sorrow clasps his dying friend,  
 From whose cold lip with interrupted phrase  
 These accents broke. O dearest, best of men! 295  
 My heart is fruitful with ten thousand thoughts  
 Of gratitude and love to thee; but fate  
 Denies my voice the utterance. O my friend!  
 O Hyperanthes! hear my tongue unfold      299  
 What thou shouldst ne'er have known before this  
 hour;

When, as I open all my secret soul,  
 I may at once retire, and veil my eyes  
 In endless night: nor thou presumption deem  
 What with my dying breath I here divulge.  
 I love thy sister. With despair I lov'd,      305  
 And thence perhaps untimely is my date;  
 Though, witness heav'n, without regret I bleed  
 With honour thus in Persia's fight and thine.

He ceas'd: th' inexorable hand of Fate      309  
 Weigh'd down his eyelids, and the gloom of death  
 His

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His fleeting fight eternally o'er shades.      311

Him on Choaspes o'er the blooming verge

His frantic mother shall bewail, and strew

Her silver tresses in the crystal tide;

While all the shore re-echoes to the name      315

Of Teribazus lost. Th' afflicted prince

The pallid corse contemplating with tears,

Thus in the bitterness of grief exclaims.

Oh! Theribazus. Oh! my friend, whose loss

I will deplore for ever. Oh! what pow'r      320

To me and thee averse thus clos'd thy breast

To Hyperanthes with distrust unkind.

She should, she must have lov'd thee. Now no more

Thy friendly aspect shall delight my eyes,

While in remembrance thy unequal'd worth      325

Will live for ever to remind my grief

Of what I lost. O Sufa, if again

Thee I revisit from this hostile land,

Far from the clamours of tumultuous war,

Then shall my hours be vacant to complaint,      330

Whole years shalt thou be witness, while I mourn,

And Ariana shall assist my woes.

Let fiercest vengeance now possess my soul.

He said, and ardent rushes on the Greek,  
 Who, while his noble enemy expir'd,      335  
 And Hyperanthes snatch'd with tender arms  
 The last embraces from his gasping friend,  
 Stood near reclin'd in sadness o'er his shield,  
 And in the pride of victory repin'd,  
 Nor mark'd his threatening foe: when swift ap-  
 proach'd      340  
 Diomedon. Before the Thespian youth  
 Aloft he rais'd his targe, and loudly thus.

Hold thee, Barbarian, from a life more worth,  
 Than thee, and Xerxes, with his host of slaves.

His words he seconds with his rapid lance.      345  
 Soon a tremendous conflict had ensu'd,  
 But Intaphernes, Mindus, and the half  
 Of Persia's leaders anxious for the life  
 Of Hyperanthes pour'd with all their bands

Betwixt th' encountring chiefs. With mutual wrath  
 They strove in vain the combat to renew. 351  
 So rage two bulls upon th' opposing banks  
 Of some deep flood, which parts the fruitful mead;  
 Defiance thunders from their angry mouths  
 In vain; in vain the furrow'd earth they rend; 355  
 Wide rolls the stream, and intercepts the war.  
 The fierce Plataean satiates his revenge  
 On vulgar lives. Before his dreaded arm  
 Whole ranks are scatter'd. But the Persian prince  
 Borne down the strefs of battle gains the shore, 360  
 Where then the brave Abrocomes advanc'd;  
 With him Orontes and Pharnuchus stood,  
 Mazæus, Abradates fam'd in arms,  
 And all the boldest of the eastern chiefs  
 Begirt with fresh battalions: here with speed 365  
 Abrocomes his brother thus bespake.

To Intaphernes is Pandates sent  
 With charge to harrafs in perpetual fight  
 The Grecians next the mountains. Thou with me  
 And these unite thy valour. Here the flow'r 370

Of

Of all our army is together drawn,  
 Here all the weight of battle will impend.  
 He said. The godlike Hyperanthes seeks  
 The dang'rous van. He heads the splendid throng  
 Of satraps, princes, and imperial pow'rs;      375  
 Themselves the lords of nations, who before  
 The throne of Xerxes tributary bow'd.  
 Now mix'd the war. Th' inverted javelins gleam  
 From ev'ry part, and fell Bellona roars.

Who first distain'd with Persian blood his sword?  
 Eupalamus. Artembares he slew      381  
 And Derdas fierce, whom Caucasus had rear'd  
 On its tempestuous brow, the savage sons  
 Of violence and rapine; but their doom  
 Great Hyperanthes marks: his angry lance      385  
 Arrests the victor in his haughty course.  
 Beneath the strong Abrocomes o'erwhelm'd,  
 Melissus swells the number of the dead.  
 None could Mycenæ boast of prouder birth  
 Than young Melissus; blooming, as the son      390  
 Of Maia, all in radiant arms he grac'd

The



The front of battle; he in Cirrha's vale,  
Where high Parnassus with its double top  
O'er shades the Pythian games, the envied prize  
Of fame obtain'd: low sinks his laurell'd head 395  
In death's cold night, and horrid gore deforms  
His graceful locks. Impatient for revenge  
Aristobulus strides before the van.  
A storm of fury darkens all his brow.  
Around he rolls his gloomy eye, and marks 400  
Achæmenes for death, of regal blood  
Deriv'd from Cræsus, once th' imperial lord  
Of nations; him the nymphs of Halys wept,  
When with delusive oracles beguil'd  
By Delphi's God, he pass'd their fatal waves 405  
A mighty empire to dissolve: nor knew  
Th' ill-destin'd king, that envious Fortune watch'd  
That dreadful moment from his hand to wrest  
The scepter of his fathers. In the shade  
Of humble life his race on Tmolus' brow 410  
Lay hid, 'till rous'd to battle here his breath  
Achæmenes resigns. Then Lycis bled  
For horrid war ill-chosen. He was skill'd

To tune the lulling flute, and melt the heart;  
 Or with his pipe's awak'ning strains invite 415  
 The lovely dames of Lydia to the dance:  
 They graceful o'er the verdant level mov'd  
 In varied measures, while the cooling breeze  
 Beneath their swelling garments wanton'd o'er  
 Their snowy breasts, and smooth Cayster's wave  
 Soft-gliding murmur'd by. His op'ning chest 421  
 Pours forth his entrails, and supine he falls.  
 Not long the Grecian triumphs. From the slain  
 In all the pride of conquest as he rends  
 His reeking javelin, Hyperanthes' steel 425  
 His knee invades, and bursts the sinewy cords.  
 The Mycenæans with uplifted shields,  
 Corinthians, and Phliasians gather round  
 The wounded Grecian. With redoubled rage  
 The conflict glows. Abrocomes incites 430  
 Each Persian leader; all obey his voice;  
 Here Abradates, there Mazæus press'd,  
 Orontes, and Hydarnes; none retire  
 From toil, or peril: urg'd on ev'ry side  
 The Greeks at length th' abandon'd chief resign

Despairing, raging, destitute he stands 436  
 Propt on his spear; his wound forbids retreat.  
 None, but his brother Eumenes, abide  
 The dire extremity. His shield defends  
 The fainting chief, till Hyperanthes' sword 440  
 Full on his arm its dreadful weight discharg'd.  
 Down with the buckler drops the sever'd hand,  
 Nor quits its grasp. Now sink the wretched pair  
 Beneath the Persian's unresisted steel:  
 From both their breasts the vital currents flow; 445  
 And mix their streams. Elate the Persians roll  
 Their deepning legions on the foes dismay'd.  
 The Greeks their station painfully maintain.  
 This soon the faithless Anaxander saw,  
 When thus to Leontiades he spake. 450

THIS is the time to aid our Persian friends.  
 Behold the Greeks are press'd. Let Thebes retire,  
 And yield a bloodless conquest to the king.

THE Thebans freight desert the broken line  
 Not with unpunish'd treachery; the spears 455

Of fierce Orontes, and Pharnuchus join'd  
With Mindus gor'd their shameful flight, and thin'd  
Their bleeding files. Meantime, as he who rul'd  
Than Jove more ancient on the throne of heav'n,  
When from the womb of Chaos dark the world  
Emerg'd to birth, where'er he view'd the jar 461  
Of atoms yet discordant and unform'd,  
Confusion thence with pow'rful voice dispell'd,  
Till light and order universal reign'd;  
So from the wall Leonidas explor'd 465  
The various war. He saw the Theban rout,  
That Corinth, Phlius, and Mycenæ look'd  
Affrighted backward; instantly he charg'd  
The sons of Lacedæmon to repair  
The disunited phalanx. E'er they move 470  
Dieneces inspires them. Fame, my friends,  
Calls forth your valour in a signal hour;  
For you this glorious period she reserv'd  
To vindicate the Spartan name. He spake,  
On either side supported by the might 475  
Of Agis and of Alpheus he conducts  
His gen'rous troop, who riveting their shields

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In dense array indissolubly firm  
 Confront the Persians, and with death repulse  
 Their scatter'd numbers; when with efforts vain  
 They oft renew'd the contest, and recoil'd 481  
 As oft confounded with diminish'd ranks,  
 Thus Hyperanthes counsell'd. Learn, O chiefs,  
 From whence alone success can grace our arms.  
 These are a band selected from the Greeks, 485  
 Unlike the others, whom we lately chas'd;  
 Perhaps the Spartans, whom we oft have heard  
 By Demaratus prais'd. To break their line  
 False is the hope, while unarray'd, and lax,  
 And wanting union singly we assail 490  
 Their strength collected. Do not we preside  
 O'er Asia's myriads, and our valour boast,  
 And martial arts above the vulgar herd?  
 Let us, ye chiefs, attempt in order'd ranks  
 To join our force, and emulate the foe. 495

THEY wait not dubious. Soon a dreadful line  
 From Oeta's mountain to the shore extends,  
 Compos'd of all the leaders, Mindus bold,

L

Phar-



Pharnuchus, and Mazæus, and the strength  
Of fierce Abrocomes, with each, who bore 500  
The highest honours, and excell'd in war.  
To these succeed a chosen number drawn  
From those, whom Asia boasts her bravest sons,  
Who from their king perpetual stipends share;  
And, station'd round his provinces, by arms 505  
His tyranny sustain. In ev'ry part  
Is Hyperanthes seen with active care  
To form the huge battalion. Soon they stand  
In just array, when cautious, lest their march  
Might still relax their order, Persia's prince 510  
Amid the center of the foremost rank  
Orontes plac'd, committing to his hand  
Th' imperial standard; whose expanded folds  
Glow'd in the air, presenting to the sun  
The richest dye of Tyre: the royal bird 515  
Amid the gorgeous tincture shone exprest  
In flaming gold. On this the eastern chief  
Commands each Persian station'd in the front  
To turn his eyes regardful, and to guide  
His slow and equal feet by this alone 520  
Retiring,

Retiring, or advancing. Next he charg'd,  
 That ev'ry warrior through the num'rous files,  
 Observing none but those before him rang'd,  
 Should watch their motions, and their steps pursue.  
 Close by the standard then th' intrepid chief 525  
 His post assumes, and animates the band.

ILLUSTRIOUS warriors, whose unconquer'd arms  
 Rebellious Ægypt, and the Libyan felt,  
 Think what the splendour of your former deeds  
 From you demands; remember, from the great 530  
 Heroic actions are a debt to fame.  
 No middle course remains for them to tread  
 Whom she hath once ennobled; and this hour  
 Or with fresh trophies will enlarge your praise,  
 Or will for ever with dishonour blast. 535

THE hero said, and all to fight proceed.  
 As when tempestuous Eurus stems the weight  
 Of western Neptune struggling through the straits,  
 Which bound Alcides' labours; here the storm  
 With rapid wing reverberates the tide, 540

There the contending surge with furrow'd tops  
To mountains swells, and whelming o'er the beach  
On either coast invests with hoary foam.

The Mauritanian and Iberian strand:

Not with less rage in hideous onset meet 545

The Grecians and Barbarians. These preserve  
Their foremost ranks unbroken, where was drawn  
The prime of Asia's warriors; and the croud,  
Though still promiscuous pouring from behind,  
Yet added pressure to th' imbattled chiefs. 550

With endless numbers. Like the mural strength  
Of some proud city bulwark'd round, and arm'd  
With rising tow'rs to guard her wealthy stores;  
Immoveable, impenetrable stood

The ferried phalanx of the Greeks. Behind, 555  
Their country spread, their fields with plenty  
crown'd,

Thier native walls and habitations lay  
With each dear pledge of friendship and of love.  
High in the Persian van th' exalted lance  
Of Hyperanthes flam'd. Beside him press'd 560  
Abrocomes, Hydarnes, and the bulk

Of Abradates terrible in war.

And here the great Dieneces upheld  
His shield's expanded surface, and alone  
Firm, as a Memphian pyramid, sustain'd      565

The stress of thousands. Alpheus here unmov'd,  
And Agis there connect their spacious orbs,  
With Menalippus wife Megistias' heir  
In one impervious line. Long time the hosts  
Maintain in strong and unrelax'd array      570  
The conflict undecided; nor could Greece  
Repel the adverse numbers, nor the force  
Of Asia's myriads could remove the Greeks.

BUT now from Sparta's king, who soon discern'd  
The Persians new arrangement, Medon hastes,      575  
Th' illustrious chief of Locris, from the race  
Of Ajax sprung in Trojan fields renown'd:  
To wise Dieneces he thus began,

LEONIDAS commands the Grecian line  
To yield before the Persians, and with speed      580  
To measure back some paces. Soon, he deems,  
The unexperienc'd foe in wild pursuit

Will break their order. Then the charge renew;  
 Let Agis, join'd with Alpheus, from the line  
 Rush with Laconia's troop imbattled deep,      585  
 And force a passage through the Barb'rous host;  
 Thou with a strong battalion from the sons  
 Of Locris drawn must follow swift, and reach  
 The Spartans led by Agis; with the rest  
 Of Locris' youth shall I advance to fill      590  
 Your vacant station, and the line maintain;  
 While in the narrow entrance, where the pass  
 Looks o'er the Malian plain on Persia's camp,  
 Do thou arrange to intercept the foe,  
 Should Asia pour fresh succours from her tents:      595  
 Then Xerxes soon the slaughter shall deplore  
 Of all these thousands in the straits inclos'd  
 For sure destruction; and the gods of Greece  
 Behold their temples with profusion grac'd  
 Of splendid off'rings from Barbarian spoils      600  
 Won by their free-born supplicants this day.

This heard, Dienece obedient gave  
 Through ev'ry band the signal of retreat,

When



When all at once drew backward. Persia stop'd,  
 As with amazement roadet to the earth 605  
 At unexpected conquest; 'till the voice  
 Of fierce Abrocomes their minds awakes  
 With these triumphant accents. By the sun  
 They fly before us. My victorious friends,  
 Delay you then to enter Greece? Away, 610  
 Rush on undaunted. I already hear  
 Our horse and chariots thund'ring o'er their plains,  
 And view their towns involv'd in Persian fires.

He said. With hurried violence they roll  
 Tumultuous forward. All with headlong pace 615  
 Wide from their ranks expatiate in pursuit,  
 Disjoin their order, and the line dissolve.  
 This when the sage Dieneces descries,  
 The Grecians halt returning to the charge  
 With sudden onset. In a moment, pierc'd 620  
 By Lacedæmon's chief, Orontes falls,  
 And quits th' imperial banner; this the Greek  
 In triumph waves, and gives the dreadful sign.  
 At once with Agis tow'ring in the front,

And rapid Alpheus all Laconia's band 625  
In deep arrangement bursting from the line  
Bear down with irresistible career  
The eastern legions shatter'd and o'erturn'd  
With all their standards trampled on the plain.  
As the swift vessel, when a rising gale 630  
Distends the canvass, its resistless course  
Impells through millions of opposing waves;  
Through the Barbarian multitudes so pierc'd  
The Spartan wedge. Invincible o'er hills  
Of arms, and mangled corsees they impress 635  
Their crimson footsteps. Persia's bravest chiefs,  
Ev'n Hyperanthes from the line is driv'n;  
And flying thousands through the pass are swept  
Before the Spartans. With a Locrian troop  
Of hideous depth Dieneces pursues 640  
His conqu'ring friends, and hews his purple way  
Through Asia's numbers, which again were clos'd  
In vain: himself unconquerable leads  
Destruction on, and heaps the rock with death.  
But on the broken foe what ruin falls 645  
From Alpheus' sword? O'er all in swift pursuit

Was

Was he renown'd. His rapid feet had match'd  
 The son of Peleus in the dusty course,  
 Or had he run for Atalanta's love,  
 He had rejected Cytheræ's aid;    650  
 Nor of her swiftness to beguile the fair  
 Before her steps had thrown the golden balls.  
 But now the wrongs, the long-remember'd wrongs  
 Of Polydorus animate his strength  
 With tenfold vigour; guided by revenge    655  
 His falchion reddens with Barbarian blood;  
 The gory drops besprinkled all his shield,  
 Like crimson poppies o'er the yellow plain.  
 As, when with horror wing'd a whirlwind rends  
 A shatter'd navy, from the ocean cast,    660  
 Th' enormous fragments hide the sandy beach:  
 Thus o'er the rock the Persians lay bestrewn  
 By Alpheus raging in the swift pursuit.  
 Not with severer pangs the god of day  
 The Theban queen afflicted, when incens'd    665  
 With her proud vaunts he hurl'd her blooming race  
 From youth and beauty to the pale abodes;  
 Than now distracted Hyperanthes' soul,

As round him, bleeding by the Spartan's lance  
His noblest friends lay gasping. Oft he strove 670  
To turn his flying legions; oft the fight  
With Abradates and his brother's force  
Renews, against insuperable foes  
In vain repugnant; till, by all around  
Deserted, mixing with the gen'ral rout 675  
He yields to fortune and the field forsakes.  
So with relapsing waves the ebbing tide  
Beats for a time against the shelving strand,  
Still by degrees retiring, and at last  
Within the bosom of the main subsides. 680

Now at Thermopyla's extremest bound  
The Spartans check'd their progress. Soon approach'd  
Dieneces, and thus began. Behold,  
What numbers have we pass'd of Persia's sons.  
Be swift, my friends, and form. He said, and fill'd  
The narrow straits with order'd files, a depth 686  
Of fifty warriors; half on Asia's host,  
Half tow'rd the pass were turn'd, a double front,  
Where ev'ry rank with twenty javelins flam'd,

The



The Locrian band to Agis assign'd, 690  
Who stands prepar'd to stop the flying foes;  
Dieneces himself to Persia's camp  
Presents the terrors of the Spartan steel.

Now, Muse, the wond'rous stratagem display,  
Which Sparta's hero, whose presiding care 695  
Mark'd all the great vicissitudes of fight,  
And rul'd the course of slaughter, had conceiv'd  
To whelm the num'rous, long-resisting foe  
In hideous death, and signalize the day  
With horrors new to war. As o'er the wall, 700  
His constant station, darting through the straits  
His watchful eye, e'er yet the battle clos'd,  
He view'd the hostile myriads swarming down,  
And nations still succeeding from the camp  
Immense, exhaustless, by an horrid length 705  
Of clust'ring helms, and shields, and threatening spears  
Join'd to the Grecian van; the wary chief,  
Left by the long-protracted fight his Greeks  
Might yield o'erlabour'd, from the Locrians chose  
A thousand warriors. These by Maron led, 710  
Ascend



Ascend the mountain, which o'erhung the pass.  
His charge he soon reveals. A thousand hands  
At once with restless pains assemble stones  
Of hugest bulk, and wither'd trunks uptorn  
In elder times by whirlwinds from the grove. 715  
Unwearied then they loosen from the rocks  
Broad, craggy fragments; from the mountain hew  
Its venerable firs, and aged oaks  
Of wide circumference, and knotted strength,  
Which, of their branches by the lightning bared,  
Presented still against its blasting flame 721  
Their hoary pride unshaken. These the Greeks  
Roll heavy on, with massy leavers heave,  
Or drag with strong-knit cables, till they reach,  
Where o'er the Persian multitudes inclin'd. 725  
The mountain's edge; so lofty, that the voice  
Of war below there lost its deafning roar,  
And soften'd into murmurs. Still his post,  
Though Hyperanthes from the field was driv'n,  
With thronging numbers Intaphernes bold 730  
Beneath the shade of this incumbent hill  
Against the fierce Diomedon maintain'd;

Book V.      L E O N I D A S.      157

Great Intaphernes, progeny of kings,  
Whom o'er Damascus, and the Syrian palms  
Had Xerxes seated with despotic sway      735  
His substitute. This Maron from on high  
Surveys, and gives the signal; downward sinks  
The nodding pile, stupendous heap of death!  
Trees roll'd on trees with mingled rock descend,  
Unintermitted ruin. Loud resound      740  
The hollow trunks against the mountain's side,  
Swift bounds each craggy mass. The foes beneath  
Look up aghast, with horror shrink, and die;  
Whole legions crush'd beneath the dreadful heaps  
Lie hid and lost, as never they had known      745  
A name, or being; while around them grew  
An hill of ruin. Numbers still survive,  
Who shun destruction with impetuous flight;  
But Agis stops them: Intaphernes falls  
Before his thund'ring arm. Again they turn      750  
To meet resistless ruin. From behind  
With twice two hundred Locrians Agis pours.

MEANTIME the Grecian line (so Sparta's king  
Decreed) had left its station, and beyond

The

The heaps of dreadful carnage was advanc'd; 755  
 There, stretch'd from Oeta to the Malian bay,  
 The Locrians led by Medon had dispos'd,  
 With Corinth, Phlius and Mycenæ's train  
 Their hostile phalanx o'er the less'ning pass.  
 Along the mountain's side Plataæ's troop, 760  
 The Mantinéans, and Tegæans stood,  
 An horrid length of war. Th' unwearied swords  
 Of Dithyrambus and Diomedon  
 Still blaz'd the terroure of the Barb'rous host.  
 Before them fled the Persians to the shore, 765  
 All in a moment by the various bands  
 Of Greece surrounded. From the gulph profound  
 Perdition here inevitable frowns,  
 And there, incircled by a grove of spears,  
 They stand devoted hecatombs to Mars. 770  
 Now not a moment's interval delays  
 Their gen'ral doom, but down the Malian steep  
 Prone are they hurried to th' expanded arms  
 Of Horror rising from the op'ning deep,  
 And grasping all their numbers, as they fall. 775  
 The dire confusion, like a storm, invades

The

Book V. LEONIDAS. 159

The chafing billows; loud refoinds the shore:  
And o'er whole troops by fell Bellona roll'd  
In one vast ruin from the craggy ridge,  
O'er all their arms and ensigns deep ingulph'd,  
With hideous roar the surge for ever clos'd. 781

*End of the fifth Book.*

LEONI-

# LEONIDAS.

## BOOK VI.

### The Argument.

*Night coming on, the Grecians retire to their tents. A guard is plac'd on the Phocian wall under the command of Agis. He admits into the camp a lady accompanied by a single slave, and conducts them to Leonidas; when she discovers herself to be Ariana, sister of Xerxes and Hyperanthes, and sues for the body of Teribazus; which being found among the slain, she kills herself upon it. The slave, who attended her, proves to be Polydorus, brother of Alpheus and Maron, and who had been formerly carried into captivity by a Phœnician pirate. He relates before an assembly of the chiefs a message from Demaratus to the Spartans, which discloses the treachery of the Thebans, and of Epialtes, the Malian, who had undertaken to lead part of*  
she



*the Persian army through a pass among the mountains of Oeta. This information throws the counsel into a great tumult, which is pacified by Leonidas, who sends Alpheus to observe the motions of these Persians, and Dieneces with a party of Lacedaemonians to support the Phocians, with whom the defence of these passages in the hills had been intrusted. In the mean time Agis sends the bodies of Teribazus and Ariana to the camp of Xerxes.*

**I**N sable pomp with all her starry train  
The night assum'd her throne. Recall'd from  
war,

Her long-protracted labours Greece forgets,  
Dissolv'd in silent slumber; all but those,  
Who watch'd th' uncertain perils of the dark,      5  
An hundred warriors: Agis was their chief.

High on the wall intent the hero sat,  
As o'er the surface of the tranquil main  
Along its undulating breast the wind  
The various din of Asia's host convey'd      10  
In one deep murmur swelling in his ear:

When, by the sound of footsteps down the pass

M

Alarm'd

Alarm'd, he calls aloud. What feet are those,  
Which beat the echoing pavement of the rock?  
With speed reply, nor tempt your instant fate. 15

He said, and thus return'd a voice unknown.  
Not with the feet of enemies we come,  
But crave admittance with a friendly tongue.

THE Spartan answers. Through the midnight  
shade 19  
What purpose draws your wandering steps abroad?

To whom the stranger. We are friends to Greece,  
And to the presence of the Spartan king  
Admission we implore. The cautious chief  
Of Lacedæmon hesitates again;  
When thus with accents musically sweet 25  
A tender voice his wondring ear allur'd.

O GEN'ROUS Grecian, listen to the pray'r  
Of one distress'd! whom grief alone hath led  
In this dark hour to these victorious tents,  
A wretched woman innocent of fraud. 30

THE Greek descending through th' unfolded  
gates

Upheld a flaming brand. One first appear'd  
In servile garb attir'd; but near his side  
A woman graceful and majestic stood;  
Not with an aspect rivalling the pow'r 35  
Of fatal Hellen, or the wanton charms  
Of love's soft queen; but such as far excell'd,  
Whate'er the lilly blending with the rose  
Paints on the cheek of beauty soon to fade;  
Such as express'd a mind, which wisdom rul'd, 40  
And sweetness temper'd, virtue's purest light  
Illumining the countenance divine,  
Yet could not sooth remorseless fate, nor teach  
Malignant fortune to revere the good,  
Which oft with anguish rends the spotless heart,  
And oft associates wisdom with despair. 46  
In courteous phrase began the chief humane.

EXALTED fair, who thus adorn'd the night,  
Forbear to blame the vigilance of war,  
And to the laws of rigid Mars impute, 50

That I thus long unwilling have delay'd  
 Before the great Leonidas to place  
 This your apparent dignity and worth.

He spake, and gently to the lofty tent  
 Of Sparta's king the lovely stranger guides.      55  
 At Agis' summons with a mantle broad  
 His mighty limbs Leonidas infolds,  
 And quits his couch. In wonder he surveys  
 Th' illustrious virgin, whom his presence aw'd:  
 Her eye submissive to the ground inclin'd      60  
 With veneration of the godlike man.  
 But soon his voice her anxious dread dispell'd,  
 Benevolent and hospitable thus.

Thy form alone, thus amiable and great,  
 Thy mind delineates, and from all commands      65  
 Supreme regard. Relate, thou noble dame,  
 By what relentless destiny compell'd,  
 Thy tender feet the paths of darkness tread.  
 Rehearse th' afflictions, whence thy virtue mourns.

Book VI.      L E O N I D A S.      165

ON her wan cheek a sudden blush arose,      70  
Like day's first dawn upon the twilight pale,  
And wrapt in grief these words a passage broke.

IF to be most unhappy, and to know,  
That hope is irrecoverably fled;  
If to be great and wretched may deserve      75  
Commiseration from the good; behold,  
Thou glorious leader of unconquer'd bands,  
Behold descended from Darius' loins  
Th' afflicted Ariana, and my pray'r  
Accept with pity, nor my tears disdain!      80  
First, that I lov'd the best of human race,  
By nature's hand with ev'ry virtue form'd,  
Heroic, wife, adorn'd with ev'ry art;  
Of shame unconscious does my heart reveal.  
This day in Grecian arms conspicuous clad      85  
He fought, he fell. A passion long conceal'd  
For me alas! within my brother's arms  
His dying breath resigning, he disclos'd.  
—Oh I will stay my sorrows! will forbid  
My eyes to stream before thee, and my heart,      90



Thus full of anguish, will from sighs restrain!  
 For why should thy humanity be griev'd  
 With my distress, and learn from me to mourn  
 The lot of nature doom'd to care and pain!  
 Hear then, O king, and grant my sole request, 95  
 To seek his body in the heaps of slain.

Thus to the Spartan su'd the regal maid  
 Resembling Ceres in majestic woe,  
 When, suppliant at Jove's resplendent throne,  
 From dreary Pluto, and th' infernal gloom 100  
 Her lov'd and lost Proserpina she sought:  
 Fix'd on the weeping queen with steadfast eyes,  
 Laconia's chief these tender thoughts recall'd.

Such are thy sorrows, O for ever dear!  
 Who now at Lacedæmon dost deplore 105  
 My everlasting absence! then inclin'd  
 His head, and sigh'd; nor yet forgot to charge  
 His friend, the gentle Agis, through the straits  
 The Persian princess to attend and aid.  
 With careful steps they seek her lover's corse. 110  
 The

The Greeks remember'd, where by fate repress'd  
His arm first ceas'd to mow their legions down,  
And from beneath a mass of Persian slain  
Soon drew the hero by his armour known.

To Agis' high pavilion they resort. 115

Now, Ariana, what transcending pangs  
Thy soul involv'd? What horror clasp'd thy heart?  
But love grew mightiest, and her beauteous limbs  
On the cold breast of Teribazus threw  
The grief-distracted maid. The clotted gore 120  
Deform'd her snowy bosom. O'er his wounds  
Loose flow'd her hair, and bubbling from her eyes  
Impetuous sorrow lav'd the purple clay.  
When forth in groans her lamentations broke.

O TORN for ever from my weeping eyes! 125

Thou, who despairing to obtain her heart,  
Who then most lov'd thee, didst untimely yield  
Thy life to fate's inevitable dart  
For her, who now in agony unfolds  
Her tender bosom, and repeats her vows 130  
To thy deaf ear, who fondly to her own

Now clasps thy breast insensible and cold.

Alas! do those unmoving, ghastly orbs

Perceive my gushing anguish! Does that heart,

Which death's inanimating hand hath chill'd, 135

Share in my sufferings, and return my sighs!

—Oh! bitter unsurmountable distress!

Lo! on thy breast is Ariana bow'd,

Hangs o'er thy face, unites her cheek to thine

Not now to listen with enchanted ears 140

To thy persuasive eloquence, no more

Charm'd with the wisdom of thy copious mind!

SHE could no more. Invincible despair

Suppress'd her utterance. As a marble form

Fix'd on the solemn sepulcher, unmov'd 145

O'er some dead hero, whom his country lov'd, ↓

Bends down the head with imitated woe:

So paus'd the princess o'er the breathless clay,

Intranc'd in sorrow. On the dreary wound,

Where Dithyrambus' sword was deepest plung'd,

Mute for a space and motionless, she gaz'd. 151

Then with a look unchang'd, nor trembling hand

Drew

Book VI.      L E O N I D A S.      169

Drew forth a poniard, which her garment veil'd,  
And sheathing in her heart th' abhorred steel,  
On her slain lover, silent sinks in death.      155  
In vain the Spartan interven'd. With tears  
He view'd the prostrate lovers, and exclaim'd.

Oh! most unhappy, heavy on your heads  
Hath sorrow fall'n, which o'er your pale remains  
Commands this pity from a stranger's eye!      160  
Illustrious ruins, may the grave impart  
That peace, which life denied! And now receive  
This pious office from a hand unknown.

So saying, from his shoulders he unclasp'd  
His ample robe, and strew'd the waving folds      165  
O'er the pale dead. Then turning, he bespake  
The slave, who stood beside him. Thou, who ledst  
Thy queen ill-destin'd to the fatal tents  
Of Lacedæmon, now returning bear  
Her bleeding reliques to the Persian lord;      170  
Thou, and these captives, whom I free from bonds.

ART thou a Spartan (interrupts the slave)  
 And dost thou counsel me to seek again  
 A clime unblest'd, where freedom never dwells?  
 No. Bear me to Leonidas. Alone      175  
 Shall he decide, if wretched, as I seem,  
 I may not claim protection from this camp.

WHOE'ER thou art (amaz'd the chief replies)  
 Thou may'st indeed a better lot demand,  
 Than I, a stranger to thy hidden worth,      180  
 Unconscious offer'd. Thy ignoble garb  
 Conceal'd a virtue, which I now revere.  
 And since thy suffering soul hath long indur'd  
 The gloom of bondage, and the hated face      184  
 Of tyrants view'd, now change the horrid scene;  
 Here freedom reigns, and justice: come and seek  
 With me their great protector. Ending here,  
 Swift he conducts him to Laconia's king,  
 When Agis thus Leonidas address'd.      189

Lo! far superiour to the name, which marks  
 His habit with dishonour, one, who sves



Book VI. L E O N I D A S. 171

For thy protection! Here the slave subjoin'd.  
I stand thy suppliant now. Thou soon shalt learn,  
If I deserve thy favour. I intreat  
To see th' assembled leaders of your host, 195  
For I am fraught with tidings, which import  
The weal of all the Grecians. Agis streight,  
Appointed by Leonidas, convenes  
The various leaders. To the tent they throng,  
Amidst them plac'd, the stranger thus began. 200

O ALPHEUS! Maron! hither turn your sight,  
And know your brother. From their seats they start.  
From either burst, with tears of transport mix'd  
The name of Polydorus. On his breast  
Each fondly strives to rush, but he withstands; 205  
While down his cheek a stream of anguish pours  
From his dejected eyes in torture bent  
On that vile garb, which sham'd his freeborn limbs.  
At length these accents intermix'd with groans  
Broke from his heart, while all stood wond'ring  
round. 210

You

You first shall know, if this unhappy slave  
Yet merits your embraces. Now approach'd  
Leonidas. Before him all recede,  
Ev'n Alpheus' self, and yields his brother's hand,  
Which in his own the gen'rous hero press'd; 215  
Then with majestic goodness thus bespake  
Th' afflicted youth, and mitigates his pains.

FORBEAR to mourn, thou unexampled youth.  
Thy friends, thy country, all on thee shall gaze  
With veneration, whose unshaken mind 220  
The chains of Asia never could debase.  
Lo! ev'ry breast is open to thy worth,  
Each tongue prepares to hail thee with applause,  
Who hast thy country honour'd ev'n in bonds.]

He ceas'd when Alpheus with an eager hand  
Divests his brother of his base attire, 226  
And his own mantle o'er the shoulders threw  
Of Polydorus. Agis too advanc'd,  
With friendly arms infolds him, and began.

Now, in thy native liberty secure, 230  
Smile on thy past afflictions, and relate,  
What chance restor'd thy virtue to the Greeks.

THEN Polydorus to the list'ning chiefs.

I was a Spartan. When my tender prime  
On manhood border'd, from my native shore 235  
Snatch'd by Phœnician pirates, I was sold,  
To Ariana, sister to the king  
And Hyperanthes. Fortune there was kind  
My bonds committing to that gentle hand.  
Yet was I still a captive, and estrang'd 240  
From Lacedæmon. Demaratus oft  
With friendly sorrows would my lot deplore,  
Nor less his own ill-fated virtue mourn'd  
Lost to his country in a servile court,  
The center of corruption; where in smiles 245  
Is envy painted, treachery, and hate,  
And rankling malice; where alone sincere  
The dissolute seeks no disguise: where he,  
Who all possesses, that a king can give,  
Is far less happy than the meanest son 250

Of

Of liberty, and groveling, as the slave,  
Who serves his cruel pride. Yet here the sun  
Ten times his annual period hath renew'd,  
Since Polydorus hath in bondage groan'd.  
My bloom now past, or else by pining care 255  
Untimely wither'd, I at last return,  
And to my native land the tydings bear  
Of instant desolation. Here in grief  
He paus'd, when thus Leonidas. Proceed.  
Though from thy lips inevitable fate 260  
To all be threaten'd, thou art heard by none,  
Whose dauntless souls can entertain a thought,  
But how to fall the noblest. Thus the chief.  
The rest in speechless expectation wait.  
Such was the solemn silence, which o'erspread 265  
The shrine of Ammon, or Dodona's shades,  
When anxious mortals from the mouth of Jove  
Their doom explor'd. Nor Polydorus long  
Suspends the Grecians, but resumes his tale.

As I this night accompanied the steps 270  
Of Ariana, e'er we reach'd the straits

Before

Before our view then op'ning, one appear'd  
With hasty feet now traversing the way,  
Now fix'd intensely tow'ards the Grecian wall;  
Then on a sudden starting would renew 275  
His restless pace. As nearer we approach'd,  
He by the moon, which glimmer'd o'er our heads,  
Descried us, when advancing he demands  
Where bent our midnight course. I knew the voice  
Of Demaratus. To my breast I clasp'd 280  
The venerable exile, and replied.  
Our purpose ask not. Sparta's camp we seek,  
And oh! farewell for ever! He rejoin'd.  
Thrice happy Polydorus! Thou again  
Shalt visit Sparta to these eyes denied. 285  
Upon your paths may heav'n's protection smile.  
Soon as you mix with yon triumphant tents,  
Say to the Spartans, whose unconquer'd arms  
Defend those rocks, you saw their exil'd king;  
Say, though their blind credulity depriv'd 290  
Te wretched Demaratus of his home,  
From ev'ry joy secluded, which awaits  
The parent and the husband, from his wife,

His



His offspring torn, his friends, and native gates,  
Him from his virtue could they ne'er divide: 295  
Say, that ev'n here, where all are kings, or slaves,  
Amid the riot of flagitious courts  
Not quite extinct the Spartan spirit glows  
Within his breast, though grief hath dim'd its fires.  
Remembring this to Lacedæmon's chief 300  
Report, that newly to the Persian host  
Return'd a Marian, Epialtes nam'd,  
Who as a spy had fought the Grecian tents.  
He to the tyrant magnified his art,  
Which with delusive eloquence had wrought 305  
The Greeks to such despair, that Asia's king  
Had been e'er now their sov'reign master own'd,  
Had not the spirit of their single chief,  
By fear unconquer'd, and on death resolv'd,  
Restor'd their valour: therefore would the king 310  
Thrust to his guidance a selected band,  
They soon should pierce th' unguarded bounds of  
Greece,  
Led through a secret passage o'er the hills,  
Where no Leonidas should bar their way.

Meantime

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Meantime by him the treach'rous Thebans sent  
Assurance of their aid. Th' assenting king      316  
At once decreed two myriads to advance  
With Hyperanthes, with Abrocomes,  
And bold Hydarnes. Ev'ry chief besides,  
Whom youth, or valour, or ambition warms,      320  
Rous'd by the traitor's eloquence, attends  
From all the nations, fir'd with eager zeal  
Teh first to enter Greece. In silence now  
The youth remains. Tremendous from his seat  
Uprose Plataea's chief. His eyes were flames,      325  
And thus on trembling Anaxander burst  
The furious accents from his livid lips.

YET e'er we fall, O traitor, shall this arm  
To hell's avenging furies sink thy head.

ALL now is tumult, ev'ry bosom swells      330  
With rage untam'd, and vengeance. Half unsheath'd  
Diomedon's impetuous falchion blaz'd.  
But, as the Cholchian forcerefs renown'd  
In fables old, or Circe, when they fram'd

A potent spell from Erebus to wake      335  
 The dead in dark and fleeting forms to glide  
 Before the moon's dim twilight, with their charms  
 Smooth'd all the sea, and silenc'd each rude blast;  
 Till not a billow heav'd against the shore,  
 Nor ev'n the wanton-winged zephir breath'd      340  
 The lightest whisper through the magic air:  
 So, when thy voice, Leonidas, is heard,  
 Fell Discord listens; Rage with sacred awe  
 Subsides in silence; while Confusion slept.

WITHHOLD this rashness (interpos'd the king)  
 Before we punish, let us find the guilt.      346  
 Not yet hath Persia overturn'd our tents,  
 Not yet her Barb'rous shouts our ears alarm.  
 We still have time for vengeance, and to know,  
 If yet our swords destruction may repel,      350  
 Or how to die most glorious. Then arose  
 Dieneces, and thus the Greeks bespake.

Ere yet they pass our border, Xexes' host  
 Must learn to conquer, and the Greeks to fly.

The

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The spears of Phocis guard the secret pass.    355

Let instant messengers be thither sent

To know the Persians progress.    Alpheus here,

LEONIDAS, behold, my willing feet

Shall to the Phocians bear thy great commands,

Or climb the hills to mark th'approaching foe.    360

THOU active son of valour (thus returns

The chief of Lacedæmon) in my thoughts

For ever present, when the public cause

Demands the swift, the vigilant, and bold!

Go and surmount the rocks ærial height.    365

And while, around, Dieneces conducts

An hundred Spartans to the Phocians aid,

Thou from the hills observe the Persians march.

BEFORE the purple-winged morn the night

Retiring warn'd their conference to cease.    370

They all disperse.    When hastning on his course

And ready now to climb the lofty crags,

O Polydorus, Alpheus thus exclaims,

Long lost and late recover'd! we must part  
 Once more, and now for ever. Thou return, 375  
 And kiss the sacred soil, which gave thee birth,  
 Which calls thee back to freedom? Dearest youth,  
 I should have tears to give thee—but farewell!  
 My country chides me loit'ring in thy arms.

THIS said, he quits his brother, and ascends, 380  
 While Polidorus answers. Alpheus, no.  
 I have the marks of bondage to erase,  
 My blood must wash the shameful stain away.

WE have a father (Maron interpos'd)  
 Thy unexpected presence will revive 385  
 His heavy age, that childless else will mourn.  
 Here Polydorus with a gloomy smile.

ILL should I comfort others. View these eyes;  
 Faint is their light, and vanish'd is my bloom  
 Before its hour of ripeness. In my breast 390  
 Grief as a native will for ever dwell,  
 Nor yield to time. Unceasing shall my soul

Brood



Brood o'er the dire remembrance of my youth  
 In servitude thus wasted. Life with me  
 Hath lost its savour. Then in silent woe      395  
 He hangs his head. His brother pleads in vain.  
 He answers only with repeated groans.  
 Now in his view Dieneces advanc'd  
 With Sparta's band. On them his eyes are fix'd  
 Immoveable, and thus his mind revolves.      400

I too, like these, in Lacedæmon sprung,  
 Instructed once, like these, to poise the spear,  
 And lift the pond'rous shield. Ill-destin'd wretch!  
 Thy arm is now enervate, and would fail  
 Beneath the buckler's weight. O cruel Heav'n!      405  
 Who didst compel my free born hand to change  
 The warrior's arms for ignominious bonds;  
 Wouldst thou compensate for my chains, my shame,  
 My ten years sorrows, and the black despair,  
 Which on my youth has prey'd; propitious once  
 Grant, I may bear my buckler to the field,      411  
 And known a Spartan seek the shades below.

He ceas'd, and sudden turn'd his steps aside  
 To find the tent of Agis; there the youth  
 With grateful sorrow ministers his aid,      415  
 While with a kind and hospitable hand  
 The gentle Agis by her lover's corse  
 On one sad bier the pallid beauties laid  
 Of Ariana. He from shackles frees  
 Two Persian captives, whom his gen'rous arm      420  
 That day preserv'd from slaughter, then began.

To you I give that freedom, which you fought  
 To snatch from me. This recompense I ask,  
 And this alone. Transport to Asia's camp  
 These bleeding reliques; bid the Persian king      425  
 Weep o'er this flow'r thus blasted in its pride;  
 Then say, th' all-judging gods have thus ordain'd:  
 Thou, whose ambition o'er the groaning earth  
 Leads desolation, o'er the nations spreads  
 Calamity and tears, thou first shalt mourn,      430  
 And through thy house destruction first shall range.

Thus charg'd, to Asia's host the captives bend.  
 They soon attain the Phocian wall, where now

Was Dithyrambus station'd. He perceives  
 The mournful bier approach. To him the fate 435  
 Of Ariana was already told.

He meets the captives, when, with weeping eyes  
 On Teribazus turn'd, he thus exclaims.

O! As thy arms present thee, hadst thou been  
 Indeed a Grecian! then thy gen'rous heart 440  
 Its valour ne'er had wasted to support  
 A king's injustice; then a gentler fate,  
 Had bless'd thy life, or bleeding thou hadst known,  
 How sweet is death for liberty. A Greek  
 This friendly wish affords thee, though his head 445  
 Had lost the honours gather'd from thy fall;  
 When fortune favour'd, or propitious heav'n  
 Smil'd on the better cause. Ill-fated pair!  
 Whom with this stream of pity here I lave;  
 But that my hostile hands imbru'd with gore 450  
 Must be ungrateful to your loathing shades,  
 From all the neighb'ring valleys would I cull  
 Their fairest growth, and strew your hearse with  
 flow'rs.

Yet O accept these tears, and pious pray'rs!  
May peace attend your ashes! may your shades 455  
Pass o'er the silent pool to happier seats,  
Where tyrants ne'er can enter to molest  
The blissful region; but are far remov'd  
To realms of horror, where from righteous heav'n  
They bear those pains, they merit from mankind!

He ceas'd in tears. The captives leave the wall,  
And slowly down Thermopylæ proceed. 462

*End of the sixth Book.*

# LEONIDAS.

## BOOK VII.

### The Argument.

*The bodies of Teribazus and Ariana are brought into the presence of Xerxes, soon after a report had reach'd the camp, that half his navy was shipwreck'd. The Persian monarch, quite dispirited, is persuaded by Argestes, one of the satraps, to send an ambassador to the Spartan king. Argestes himself is deputed, who, after revealing his embassy to Leonidas in secret, is by him led before the whole army, and there receives his answer. In the mean time Alpheus returns and declares, that the enemies were possess'd of the passages in the hills, and were hastening to Thermopylae, upon which Leonidas offers to send away all the army except his three hundred Spartans; but Diomedon, Demophilus, Ditbyrambus, and Megistias refuse to depart: he*



*then dismisses Argestes, informs the Grecians of his design to attack the Persian camp in the night, and making all the necessary dispositions retires to his pavilion.*

**B**EFORE the tent of Xerxes now arriv'd  
 The Persian captives. On with solemn pace  
 And slow they move. The monarch from afar  
 Descries their sad demeanour. They approach,  
 Nor he forbids. That morn had Rumour told 5  
 The loss of half his navy dash'd on rocks  
 By angry blasts, or buried in the surge.  
 Thus, when his bleeding sister met his eyes,  
 Already sunk in sadness, he had lost  
 His kingly pride, the parent of disdain, 10  
 And cold indifference for others woes;  
 Nor ev'n beside his sister's nobler corse  
 Her humble lover now his scorn awak'd.  
 In tears the captive's mournful tale he heard,  
 And then first knew compassion; but e'er long 15  
 Those traces vanish'd from the tyrant's breast:  
 His former gloom redoubles, for himself  
 His anxious bosom heaves, and now he fears,

Book VII. L E O N I D A S. 187

Lest he with all his numbers should be cast  
A prey to Fortune. Near the monarch stood 20  
The Spartan exile, whom he thus bespake.

O DEMARATUS, what will fate ordain!  
Lo! Fortune turns against me! Who shall know,  
How far her daring malice may extend,  
Which rages now so near me, and hath made 25  
My house the seat of ruin? I have sent  
From my unshester'd side my bravest chiefs,  
And choicest troops to pass the desert hill,  
Led by this Malian; may not there the Greeks  
With opposition more tremendous still 30  
And ruinous, than yester sun heheld,  
Resistless hold their craggy post; renew  
Their stony thunder with augmented rage,  
And send whole quarries down the rocky steep  
Again to crush my legions? Oh! unfold 35  
Thy secret soul, nor hide the harshlest truth;  
Say what remains to hope? The exile here.

If truth unblam'd may issue from my lips,  
Too well, imperial Xerxes, you presage

What

What may befall your legions. If the Greeks    40  
 Arrang'd within Thermopylæ, a pass  
 Accessible and spacious, could repel  
 With such destruction their unnumber'd foes;  
 What scenes of havoc must th' untrodden paths,  
 Confin'd among the craggy hills, afford?    45

IMMERS'D in care the monarch silent sat.  
 Amid th' incircling peers Argestes stood,  
 A potent prince. On Sipylus he reign'd,  
 Whose lofty summits overlook'd the waves  
 Of Hermus and Pactolus; either stream,    50  
 Enrich'd with golden sands, its tribute bore  
 To this great satrap: through the servile court  
 Yet was there none more practis'd in the arts  
 Of mean submission; none more skill'd to gain  
 The royal favour; none, who better knew    55  
 The phrase, the looks, and gesture of a slave.  
 In soothing words he thus the king bespake.

If Xerxes will to spare his faithful bands,  
 And not exert the terrors of his pow'r;  
 More gentle means of conquest than by arms,    60

Nor less secure may artifice supply.  
 Renown'd Darius, thy imperial fire,  
 Great in the spoil of kingdoms, long in vain  
 The fields of proud Euphrates with his host  
 O'erspread; at length confiding in the wiles 65  
 Of Zopyrus the mighty king subdu'd  
 The Babylonian tow'rs: but who shall count,  
 What num'rous states by policy have fall'n;  
 And let corruption once her aid impart,  
 Not one shall stand. What race of men possess 70  
 Such probity and wisdom, whom the veil  
 Of craft may blind not, nor corruption's charm  
 Seduce. O Xerxes, thou, whom heav'n hath rais'd  
 To more than mortal greatness, canst thou find  
 Through all thy empire, which from India's shore  
 Shall reach Eurotas soon, no dazzling gift 76  
 To gain the Grecian leader? O dispel  
 The cloud of sadness from those sacred eyes,  
 And proffer streight to Lacedæmon's chief,  
 What may thy own munificence declare, 80  
 And win his sword to aid thee. Xerxes here,  
 Rous'd from his trance of sorrow, swift replied.



Wise are thy words and counsels. Go, repair,  
 My faithful servant, to the Grecian chief;  
 Fall down before him; bid him join our arms, 85  
 And he shall reign o'er all the Grecian states.

At once Argestes leaves the monarch's side.  
 He now approaches to the Phocian wall.  
 Thence Dithyrambus leads him to the tent  
 Of Lacedæmon's king. Retreated there, 90  
 Alone the hero meditating sat  
 On future woes to Persia. At his feet  
 Prone bows Argestes, and begun. Thus low  
 Before thy awful presence Xerxes wills,  
 That I should bend me prostrate to the earth, 95  
 And thus accost thee. Great and matchless chief,  
 By fortune favour'd, and lov'd by heav'n,  
 Thus says the lord of Asia; join our arms,  
 And we reward thee with the sov'reign rule  
 O'er all the pow'rful states of haughty Greece. 100  
 And, O illustrious warrior, heed my words.  
 Think on the bliss of royalty, the pomp  
 Of courts, their endless pleasures, trains of slaves,

Who



Book VII.      L E O N I D A S.      191

Who restless watch for thee and thy delights,  
With all the glories of unrivall'd sway. 105  
Look on th' Ionic and Æolian Greeks,  
From them their fantom, liberty, is flown,  
While in each province, rais'd by Xerxes' hand,  
Some favour'd chief presides (exalted state  
Which envious freedom gives not) on his head 110  
He bears the gorgeous diadem, and sees  
His equals once now prostrate at his throne.  
Yet how much greater thou, whom gen'ral Greece,  
That teems with mightiest states, shall call her lord,  
Thee only worthy. How will Greece rejoice 115  
Around thy throne, and hail th' auspicious hour,  
When thou, selected by the Persian king  
To bless consenting nations with thy sway,  
Didst calm the fury of unsparing war, 119  
Which else had delug'd all with blood and flames!

He said. The chief replies not, but commands  
The Thespian youth, who near the tent had watch'd,  
To summon all the Grecians. He obeys.  
While from his seat the hero mov'd, and bade

The

The Persian follow. He amaz'd attends,      125  
 Surrounded soon by all the Grecian bands;  
 When him the godlike Spartan thus bespake.

HERE, Persian, tell thy ambassy, repeat,  
 That to obtain my friendship Asia's lord  
 Bids me accept the sov'reignty of Greece;      130  
 Then view this band, whose valour shall preserve  
 That Greece unconquer'd, which your king bestows,  
 And strew your bodies on its crimson plains:  
 The indignation painted on their looks,  
 And gen'rous scorn shall answer for their chief      135

THE hero ceas'd, when suddenly return'd  
 The speed of Alpheus; all suspended streight  
 On him direct their sight, who thus began.

E'ER I could join the Phocians, from the hill,  
 Which overhung the close defile, I view'd      140  
 The pow'rs of Persia. Down the narrow streight  
 No sooner gleam'd th' innumerable spears,  
 But by our angry destiny misled,

Book VII. LEONIDAS. 193

Or some curst dæmon, enemy to Greece,  
The Phocians quit their station. Through the pass  
An inundation of Barbarians pours,  
The traitor Epialtes is their guide,  
And to Thermopylæ directs their course.

He here concludes. Unutterable fear  
In horrid silence wrapt the list'ning throng,  
Aghast, confounded; silent too were those,  
Who knew no terror, yet with wonder mute,  
Thick-wedg'd inclos'd Leonidas around,  
Who thus with calmest elocution spoke.

I now behold my destiny compleat,  
And how at last Leonidas must die.  
Here with the Spartans shall I rest behind,  
While you, my faithful, brave allies, retreat.  
Then art thou near, thou glorious, sacred hour,  
Which shalt my country's liberty confirm!  
All hail! thou solemn period! thee the tongues  
Of Virtue, Fame, and Freedom shall record,  
And celebrate in ages yet unborn.

O

Then

Then, O farewell, Megistias wife and brave;  
 Thou too experienc'd, venerable chief, 165  
 Demophilus farewell: farewell to thee,  
 Invincible Diomedon, to thee,  
 Unequall'd Dithyrambus, and to all,  
 You other dauntless warriors, who may claim  
 Praise from my lips, and friendship from my heart.  
 You after all the wonders, which your swords 171  
 Have here accomplish'd, shall enrich your names  
 With fresh renown. Your valour must compleat,  
 What we begin. Here first th' astonish'd foe  
 A dying Spartan shall with terrour view, 175  
 And tremble, while he conquers; then, by fate  
 Led from his dreadful victory disma'y'd  
 Against the phalanx of united Greece,  
 By your unconquer'd spears himself shall fall.

HERE interpos'd the fierce Platæan chief. 180  
 By the twelve gods enthron'd in heav'n supreme,  
 By my fair name unfullied yet I swear,  
 Ne'er shall thy eyes, Leonidas, behold  
 Diomedon forsake thee. First let strength

Desert

Book VII.      L E O N I D A S.      195

Desert my limbs, and valour shun my heart,      185

Did I not face the Marathonian war?

Have I not seen Thermopylæ? O Fame,

What more canst thou bestow, or I receive?

Where can I living purchase brighter praise,

Than dying here? A more illustrious tomb      190

Where can I gain, than underneath the heaps

Of Persians fall'n the victims of our sword.

He ended, when Demophilus subjoin'd.

O KING of Sparta, pride of human race,

Whom none e'er equall'd, but the seed of Jove,      195

Thy own forefather number'd with the Gods,

Lo! I am old. With faltering steps I tread

The prone descent of years. The winged hours

By me, as one unequal to their speed,

Who can no more their fleeting joys attain,      200

Unheeding slide. My youth my country claim'd,

My age no more can serve her; what remains?

What eligible hope can wisdom form,

But to die well? Upon this glorious earth

With thee, unrival'd hero, will I close      205



The eye of life. So spake the hoary chief,  
 When Dithyrambus next. O first of Greeks,  
 Me too think worthy to attend thy fame  
 With this most dear and venerable man  
 For ever honour'd from my tend'rest age,      210  
 Ev'n till on life's extremity we part.  
 Nor too aspiring let my hopes be deem'd;  
 Should the Barbarian in his triumphs mark  
 My youthful limbs among the gory heaps,  
 Thence may his fears be doubled, when again      215  
 He meets in fields hereafter to be known  
 The Grecian standards, trembling at a foe,  
 To whom the flow'r, and blooming joys of life  
 Are less alluring than a noble fate.

To him Demophilus. Wilt thou too bleed,      220  
 My Dithyrambus? — But I here withhold  
 All counsel from thee, who art wise, as brave.  
 If then thy magnanimity retain  
 Thee too with great Leonidas to fall,  
 At either's side our limbs shall press the ground,      225  
 And drop together in the arms of Death;

So if th' attentive traveller we draw  
 To our cold reliques, wondring shall he trace  
 The diff'rent scene, and pregnant with applause,  
 O wise old man, exclaim, thou well hast chose 230  
 The hour of fate: and; O unequall'd youth,  
 Who to thy country didst thy bloom devote,  
 Mayst thou remain for ever dear to Fame!  
 May Time rejoice to name thee! and may Peace  
 With gentlest pinions hover o'er thy urn! 235

THIS said, the hero with his lifted shield  
 His face o'er shades, and drops a secret tear;  
 Not this the tear of anguish, but deriv'd  
 From fond affection grown mature with time;  
 Which in a feeble mind to pain had turn'd, 240  
 But in the Thespian's firm and virtuous breast,  
 Alone a manly tenderness awak'd  
 Unmix'd with pity, or with vain regret.

MEGISTIAS last address'd the Spartan chief.  
 Thou, whom the Gods have chosen to exalt 245  
 Above mankind in virtue and renown,

O call not me presumptuous, who implore  
Among these heroes thy regardful ear!  
To Lacedæmon I a stranger came.  
You there preserv'd me, there with honours clad;  
Nor have I yet one benefit repay'd. 251  
That now the gen'rous Spartans may behold  
In me their high beneficence not vain,  
Here to their cause I consecrate my breath.

Not so Megistias (interpos'd the king) 255  
Thou and thy son retreat. Again the fear.

FORBID it, thou eternally ador'd,  
O Jove, confirm my persevering soul!  
Nor let my fear neglect this happy hour  
To shew the Spartans, I deserv'd their care. 260  
Thou, Menalippus, hear the king's command,  
And my paternal tenderness revere.  
Do thou withdraw thee from me, to my hand  
Thy arms resigning. Fortune will supply  
Fresh toil for valour. Vanquish then, or find 265  
A glorious grave; but spare thy father's eye

The

The bitter anguish to behold thy youth  
 Untimely bleed before him. Grief suspends  
 His speech, and interchangeably their arms  
 Impart their last embraces. Either wept, 270  
 The hoary parent, and the blooming son.  
 But from his temples the pontific wreath  
 Megistias now unloosens, and resigns  
 His hallow'd vestments; while the youth with tears  
 The helmet buckles o'er his snowy locks, 275  
 And on his breast adjusts the radiant mail.

While such contempt of life, such fervid zeal  
 To die with glory animate the Greeks,  
 Far other thoughts possess Argestes' soul.  
 Amaze with mingled terror smote his heart; 280  
 Cold drops, distill'd from ev'ry pore, bedew  
 His shiv'ring limbs; his bosom pants; his knees  
 Yield to their burthen; ghastly pale his cheeks,  
 Pale are his lips and trembling: such the minds  
 Of slaves corrupt, to them the beauteous face 285  
 Of Virtue turns to horror. But the chief  
 Of Lacedæmon now the wretch bespake.

RETURN to Xerxes; tell him, on this rock  
 The Grecians faithful to their post await  
 His chosen myriads; tell him, thou hast seen, 290  
 How far the lust of empire is below  
 A free-born mind: and tell him, to behold  
 A tyrant humbled, and by virtuous death  
 To seal my country's freedom, is a good  
 Surpassing all, his boasted pow'r can give. 295

He said, the Persian hastens through the pass.  
 But now once more Diomedon arose.  
 Wrath overcasts his forehead, while he spake.

YET more must stay and bleed. Inglorious Thebes  
 Never shall receive her traitors back, but here 300  
 Shall they atone their perfidy by death,  
 Ev'n from their swords, to whom their abject hearts  
 Have sacrific'd their faith. Nor dare to hope,  
 Ye vile deserters of the public weal,  
 Ye coward slaves, that mingled with the heaps 305  
 Of those, who perish in their country's cause,  
 You shall your shame conceal. Whoe'er shall pass

Along



Along this field of glorious slain, and trace  
 With veneration ev'ry nobler corse;  
 His soul, though warm with generous applause, 310  
 A while shall curb the transport to repeat  
 Its execrations o'er your impious heads,  
 On whom that fate, which gives to others fame,  
 Is infamy and vengeance. Dreadful thus  
 On the pale Thebans sentence he pronounc'd, 315  
 Like Rhadamanthus, from th' infernal throne  
 When with inexorable frowns he doom'd  
 The guilty dead to ever-during pain;  
 While Phlegethon its flaming billows roll'd  
 Before their fight, and ruthless furies shook 320  
 Their hissing serpents. All the Greeks assent  
 With clamours echoing through the concave rock.

FORTH Anaxander in th' assembly stood,  
 And thus began with indignation feign'd.  
 If yet your clamours, Grecians, are allay'd, 325  
 Behold, I stand before you to demand,  
 Why these my brave companions, who alone  
 Of all the Thebans under my command

Durst force their passage through dissuading crouds  
 To join your host, should now be traitors deem'd;  
 Accas'd by one alone, a banish'd wretch, 331  
 Whom Lacedæmon in her anger drove  
 Far from her confines; one, who meanly sought  
 A servile court for shelter: has he drawn  
 Such virtues thence, that Sparta, who before 335  
 Held him unworthy of his native soil,  
 Should trust him now before auxiliar friends?  
 Injurious Greeks! we scorn the thought of flight,  
 Let Asia bring her millions; unconstrain'd  
 We wait the conflict, and for Greece will die. 340

Thus in the garb of virtue he adorn'd  
 Necessity, deluding ev'ry Greek  
 Except Laconia's hero. He perceiv'd  
 Through all its fair disguise the traitor's heart.  
 So, when at first mankind in science rude 345  
 Rever'd the moon, as bright with native beams,  
 Some sage, that walk'd with Nature through her  
 works,  
 By wisdom led, discern'd, the various orb

Itself

Itself was 'dark, in foreign splendours clad.  
 Now unexpected with his troops return'd 350  
 Dieneces, and thus to Sparta's king.

I NEED not tell thee, that the Persian pow'rs  
 Have pass'd the secret strait. This night they halt,  
 But with the morning will invade us here.  
 We come to die with thee. United thus, 355  
 Our strength a fiercer contest shall maintain;  
 Whence a more bright example to our friends,  
 And stranger terrour of the Grecian name.

HE said, when thus Leonidas began.  
 O Spartans, hear, and all you other Greeks, 360  
 Whose matchless virtue shall inroll your names  
 In time's eternal records, and inhance  
 Your country's lustre; lo! the setting sun  
 Inflames the broad horizon. All retire, 365  
 And in your tents invoke the pow'r of sleep  
 To aid your vigour, and to give your limbs  
 Unwearied patience of continued toil;  
 But when the second watch begins, let all

With

With mutual exhortation rouse to arms: 370

For soon, as Cynthia from the vault of heav'n  
Hath hung her shining lamp, through Asia's host  
Shall death with horror and amazement rage.

Their camp is open to our swords, depriv'd  
Of all its chosen warriors. But I charge 375

All, ev'n the Spartans, who are main'd, or weak,  
To pain, or toil unequal, from our camp

This hour to hasten. You, our brave allies

Of Corinth, Phlius, with th' Arcadian bands

And Mycenæans must not yet return, 380

But here, while we repose, in arms remain;

When we our tents abandon, then depart.

He said, all heard obedient, and dispers'd;

While to his tent the godlike chief repairs,

And with him Agis, whom he thus bespake. 385

O Agis, hear and mark my last command.

With wary skill dispose the nightly guard,

That no deserter from the Theban tents

May reach the camp of Asia, or ascend

To

Book VII. L E O N I D A S. 205

To those now halting on the neighb'ring hills: 390

Nor yet with us the faithless band must join.

Not with such base associates must we trust

Our great design. Their perfidy might soon

Find means to rouse the unsuspecting foe,

And all our glorious enterprize confound. 395

Then, O my faithful Agis, e'er we move,

While on the solemn sacrifice intent,

As Lacedæmon's sacred laws ordain,

Our pray'rs we offer to the tuneful nine,

Do thou in whispers charge the Theban train 400

Slow and in silence to disperse and fly.

This said, they parted. On his couch alone

Reclines the hero, where he thus revolves.

My fate is now impending. O my heart!

What more auspicious period could I chuse 405

For death, than now; when beating high with joy

Thou tell'st me, I am happy? If to live,

Or die, as Virtue dictates, be to know

The purest bliss; if she her charms display

Still beauteous, still unfading, still serene 410

To



To youth, to age, to death; whatever be  
Those other climes of uncorruptive joy,  
Which Heav'n in dark futurity conceals,  
Still here, O Virtue, thou art all our good.  
Then what a black, unspeakable reverse 415  
The wretched offspring of Injustice prove?  
What in the struggle of departing day,  
When life's last glimpse extinguishing presents  
Th' unknown, inextricable gloom of death?  
But can I paint the terrors of a breast, 420  
Where guilt resides? Leonidas forego  
The horrible conception, seek again  
Thy own untroubled heart, and grateful bow  
To those benignant pow'rs, who fram'd thy mind  
In crimes unfruitful, never to admit 425  
The black impression of a guilty thought.  
Else could I fearless thus relinquish life?  
No. Such unshaken calmness from th' unjust  
Is ever absent. Oft in them the rage  
Of some prevailing passion for a time 430  
Suppresses fear. Oft hurried on they lose  
The sense of danger, when dominion, pow'r,  
And

And purple pomp their dazzled sight enchant.

Yet still the joys of life alone they seek.

But he, who calmly meets resistless fate, 435

When glory only, and the gen'ral good

Invite him forward, must possess a soul,

Which all content deducing from itself

Can by unerring virtue's constant light

Discern, when death is worthy of his choice. 440

The man, thus great and happy, in the scope

Of his large mind is stretch'd beyond his date;

Ev'n on this shore of being he in thought

Supremely blest anticipates the good,

Which late posterity from him derives. 445

THE hero clos'd his meditation here,

The swelling transports of his mind subside

In soft oblivion, while the filken plumes

Of sleep envelop his extended limbs.

*End of the Seventh Book.*

# LEONIDAS.

## BOOK VIII.

### The Argument.

*Leonidas rising about three hours before midnight relates to an assembly of the leaders a dream, which is interpreted by Megistias; he then arms himself, and marches in proceßion with his whole troop to an altar newly rais'd on a neighbouring meadow, and there offers a sacrifice to the Muses: he invokes the assistance of those Goddesses, he animates his companions, and then placing himself at their head leads them against the enemy in the dead of the night.*

SCARCE was begun the second watch of night,  
When his pavilion Agis left, and fought  
The chief of Lacedæmon. Him he found  
Spread on his tranquil couch, while, o'er his face  
Diffus'd,

Book VIII,    L E O N I D A S,    209

Diffus'd, a glad serenity with smiles    5

His slumber painted; like an ev'ning sky

Yet streak'd with ruddy light, when summer suns

Have veil'd their beaming foreheads. Transport fill'd

The eye of Agis. Friendship swell'd his heart,

And veneration, On his knee inclin'd.    10

The hero's hand he kiss'd, and thus began,

O THOU with more than human virtues great,

Accept this homage! and may gentle sleep

Yet longer close thy eyelids, that unblam'd

I thus may bow before thee. Thus he spake    15

And, prostrate bent, his godlike friend rever'd,

Whose eye the shades of slumber now forsake.

So, when new rising heav'n's resplendent orb

Illumines first the sable skirts of night,

The white-rob'd Magi, or the Indian seers    20

Are seen from Ganges, or Euphrates' side,

Before th' emerging glory bow'd to hail

The radiant emblem of th'immortal mind.

BOTH heroes rose, and mix'd their friendly arms,

And now to Agis had the Spartan king    25

P

Disclos'd

Disclos'd his soul; when lo! the Grecian chiefs,  
All rous'd, advancing with the sudden gleam  
Of armour pierc'd the twilight shade. With joy  
Leonidas accosts them. O thrice hail!  
My virtuous friends. Approach, and all attend, 30  
While I relate, and you with wonder hear.  
This night no sooner sleep oppress'd my brows,  
But o'er my head the empyreal form  
Of my great sire Alcides seem'd display'd.  
I saw his magnitude divine; his voice 35  
I heard, his solemn mandate to arise.  
I rose. He bade me follow: I obey'd.  
Up to a mountain, whose ethereal brow  
Th' involving clouds divided, we ascend.  
E'er long we rested, suddenly the howl 40  
Of wolves and dogs, the vulture's piercing shriek,  
The yell of ev'ry beast and fowl of prey  
Within my ears discordant broke. I turn'd.  
When lo! a surface all with gore deform'd  
Beyond my view illimitable stretch'd, 45  
One vast expanse of horror. There a corse,  
Which with its huge dimensions seem'd to hide  
Th' un-



Th' unbounded plain, lay weltring, red with  
wounds

Delv'd in th' enormous limbs, which bleeding gorg'd  
The vulture's famine. Wond'ring I beheld, 50

When from behind I heard a second sound,  
Like surges tumbling o'er a craggy shore.

Again I turn'd. An ocean there appear'd

With riven keels, and shrouds, and shiver'd oars,

With arms, and mangled carcases bestrewn 55

Innumerable. The billows foam'd with blood,

And whelm'd a crimson deluge o'er the strand,

But, where the waters unobserv'd before

Between two adverse shores contracting roll'd

A stormy tide, upon the beach, forlorn, 60

One of majestic stature I descried

In ornaments imperial. Oft on me

He bent his clouded eye-balls. On my name

With imprecations oft he call'd aloud,

Then rent his splendid garments, and his head 65

In rage divested of its graceful hairs.

Impatient now he ey'd a slender skiff,

Which mounted on the curling foam approach'd.

With indignation, and reluctant grief  
 Once more his fight reverting, he embark'd      70  
 Amid the perils of the frowning waves.  
 O thou, whose virtue rank'd thee with the gods  
 (I here exclaim'd) instruct me, what produc'd  
 This desolation; when the god return'd.  
 Let thy astonish'd eye again review,      75  
 What thou didst late abhor. I look'd and saw  
 A hand, where Plenty with disporting hand  
 Pour'd all the fruits of Amalthea's horn;  
 Where bloom'd the olive, and the clustring vine  
 With its broad foliage mantled ev'ry hill;      80  
 Where Ceres with exuberance inrob'd  
 The pregnant bosom of the fields in gold;  
 Where spacious towns, whose circuits proud contain'd  
 The dazzling works of wealth, unnumber'd shone,  
 The strength and splendour of the peopled land.      85  
 Then in a moment clouds obscur'd my sight,  
 And all was vanish'd from my waking eyes.

THrice we salute the omen (thus began  
 The sage Megistias) in thy mystic dream

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I see the Grecian victories. The earth, 90  
The deep shall own their triumphs; and the tears  
Of Asia, and of Lybia shall bewail  
Their offspring cast before the vulture's beak,  
And all the monstrous natives of the main.  
Those joyous fields of plenty shall be Greece 95  
Enrich'd with conquest, and Barbarian spoils.  
And whom thou saw'st in regal vesture clad  
Print on the sands his solitary steps,  
Is Xerxes foil'd and fugitive from Greece.

MEGISTIAS thus, while ev'ry bosom felt 100  
Enthusiastic rapture, joy beyond  
All sense, and all conception but of those,  
Who die to save their country. Here again  
Leonidas th' exulting chiefs address'd.

SINCE happiness from virtue is deriv'd, 105  
Who for his country dies, that moment proves  
Most happy, as most virtuous. Such our lot.  
To this the gods shall add eternal fame.  
But now go forth, Megistias, and with speed

Prepare the victim, and the sacred flames; 110  
That to the Muses, as the Spartan law  
Commands, our pray'rs and off'rings may be paid,  
E'er to yon camp our hostile feet we bend,  
But, O remember, from the solemn rites  
Let ev'ry sound be absent, not the pipe, 115  
Nor ev'n the music-breathing flute be heard.  
Meantime, ye leaders, ev'ry band instruct  
To move in silence, nor with shouts alarm  
The midnight stillness. Mindful of their charge  
The chiefs depart. Leonidas provides 120  
His various armour. First the breastplate arms  
His ample chest. O'er this the hero spreads  
The mailed cuirass from his shoulders hung.  
The shining belt infolds his mighty loins.  
Next on his stately temples he erects 125  
The plumed helm, then grasps his pond'rous shield;  
Where nigh the center on the swelling brass  
Th' inimitable artist had imbos'd  
The shape of great Alcides, whom to gain  
Two goddesses contended. Pleasure here 130  
Won with soft wiles th' attracted eye, and there

The

The form of Virtue dignified the scene,  
In her majestic sweetness was disclos'd  
The mind sublime and happy. From her lips  
Seem'd eloquence to flow. With looks serene, 135  
But fix'd intent upon the son of Jove,  
She wav'd her hand, where winding to the skies  
Her paths ascended. On the summit stood  
Fame, and protended her eternal trump,  
Incumbent on a trophy near to heav'n. 140  
The youth attentive to her wisdom own'd  
The prevalence of Virtue; while his eye  
With all the spirit, which redeem'd the world,  
From tyranny and monsters, ardent flam'd;  
Not undescried by Pleasure, where she lay 145  
Stretch'd on a gorgeous carpet, which bespread  
The meadow with magnificence. Around  
Were flowers strewn, and wantonly in rills  
Soft streams meander'd. All relax'd her limbs  
Nor wanting yet solicitude to gain, 150  
What lost she fear'd, as struggling with despair  
She seem'd collecting all her pow'r of charms,  
And with excess of sweet allurements smil'd:



In vain; for Virtue sway'd Alcides' mind.

Hence all his labours. Trac'd with various art 155

They fill'd the surface of the spacious targe.

This portraiture of glory on his arm

Leonidas supports. Then forth he tow'rs

From his pavilion. With their troops array'd

The chiefs attended. Flaming torches blaz'd 160

In ev'ry hand. An now with silent pace

All to the solemn sacrifice proceed.

First Polydorus with the hallow'd knife,

And barley strew'd with sacred salt advanc'd,

Diomedon beside him, in his grasp 165

A weighty mace sustaining. Like the rest

All bright in armour with his shield and spear

Megistias follow'd, an unspotted priest,

And dauntless warrior. From on high his helm

With wreaths around the shining crest reveal'd 170

His sacerdotal honours. By the horns,

Where laurels twin'd, with Alpheus Maren leads

The consecrated ox. And lo! behind

Leonidas approaches. Ne'er before

With such transcending majesty he trod, 175

Nor

Nor his own virtue, as that hour, enjoy'd.  
 Then venerable moves the Thespian chief,  
 And great Dienece. To them the bloom  
 Of Dithyrambus glowing with the sense  
 Of future praise succeeds, with graceful steps 180  
 The gen'rous Agis next; the Thebans last  
 Repining and inglorious. Then slow march  
 The host all mute, nor shake their brazen arms.

Not from Thermopylæ remote the hills  
 Of Oeta yielding to a fruitful dale 185  
 Within their side half-circling had inclos'd  
 A fair expanse with verdure smooth. The bounds  
 Were edg'd with wood o'erlook'd by snowy cliffs,  
 Which from the clouds bent frowning. From a rock  
 Above the loftiest summit of the groves 190  
 A tumbling torrent wore the shagg'd stone,  
 Then gleaming through the interwoven shade  
 The valley water'd. O'er the level shone  
 Its glassy bosom, and with placid waves  
 The smiling lawn divided. Near the banks, 195  
 Which flow'rs made various, new-erected stood

A rustic altar, which a chosen train,  
Appointed by Megistias, rais'd with turf  
Cut by their falchions from the verdant mead:  
Broad was the surface, high with piles of wood, 200  
The plenteous tribute of th' adjacent groves,  
All interspers'd with laurel. Here a vase  
Fill'd with the briny waters of the sea  
(More pure than ev'ry stream or fountain deem'd)  
Was plac'd beside the altar. There with wine 205  
Unmix'd capacious goblets stood arrang'd.  
Here is the victim brought. Megistias streight  
His helm unloosens. With his hoary head  
Uncover'd round the solemn pile he treads,  
And with a branch of laurel scatters wide 210  
The sacred moisture of the main. His hand  
With mingled salt and barley next bestrews  
The altar, and the victim. O'er the horns  
Th' inverted goblet foaming with the grape  
Diffus'd the rich libation. Now advanc'd 215  
Diomedon. Megistias gave command,  
Down sunk the victim with a deathful stroke,  
Nor groan'd. Megistias buries in the throat

The

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The hallow'd steel, A crimson deluge flows.  
Swift from the limbs the fuming hide is torn, 220  
The flesh dislever'd on the altar heap'd.  
Now smoaks the pile, then sudden flames abroad.  
A burst of splendour dissipates the dark.  
Greece throngs around. Each lifts a sparkling brand  
With beaming javelins intermix'd, and shields, 225  
And polish'd helms, which multiply the blaze.  
Meantime the great Leonidas drew nigh,  
And stood before the altar. There his helm  
Unclasp'd to Agis he commits, his shield  
And spear to Dithyrambus, then his arms 230  
Extending, thus in supplication spoke.

HARMONIOUS daughters of Olympian Jove,  
Who on the top of Helicon ador'd,  
And high Parnassus, with delighted ears  
Bend to the warble of Castalia's wave, 235  
And Aganippe's murmurs, if from thence  
We must invoke your presence; or along  
The ridge of neighb'ring Pindus if your steps  
Now wander through your consecrated bow'rs,  
Thence

Thence turn, ye Muses, nor for once disdain 240  
Each with her beauteous form these hills to grace,  
And stand th' immortal witness of our fate!  
But with you bring fair Liberty, whom Jove  
And you most honour. Let her sacred eyes  
Approve her dying Grecians, let her voice 245  
With exultation tell the earth and heav'ns,  
These are her sons; then strike your tuneful shells,  
And with our praise bid harmony rejoice.  
Record us guardians of our parents age,  
Our matrons virtue, and our infants bloom, 250  
And glorious bulwarks of our country's laws,  
Who shall ennoble the historian's page,  
Or on the joyous festival inspire  
With loftier strains the virgins choral song.  
Then, O celestial maids, on yonder camp 255  
Let night sit heavy, and a sleep, like death,  
Weigh down the eye of Asia! O infuse  
A cool, untroubled spirit in our breasts,  
Which may in silence guide our daring feet  
Through all the paths of slaughter, nor affright  
The dark with tumult, till the dying groans 261  
Of



Of gasping tyrants into horror wake  
The midnight calm! Then turn Destruction wild.  
Bid Terror and Confusion revel round,  
And in one carnage heap the Barb'rous ranks, 265  
Their horse, and chariots. Let the spurning steed  
Imbrue his hoofs with blood, and shatter'd cars  
Crush with their brazen weight the prostrate necks  
Of kings, and purpled chiefs incircled round. 269  
By nations fall'n. — You, countrymen and friends,  
My last commands attend. Your gen'ral's voice  
Once more salutes you, not to rouse the brave,  
Or minds resolv'd and dauntless to confirm.  
Too well by this expiring blaze I view  
Impatient valour flash from ev'ry eye. 275  
But temper well your ardour, and your lips  
Close on the rising transport. Lo! how sleep  
Hath folded millions in its black embrace.  
No sound is wafted from th'unnumber'd foe.  
The winds themselves are silent. All conspires 280  
To this great sacrifice, where thousands soon  
Shall only wake to die. Perhaps our swords  
This night may send ev'n Xerxes' self to lead  
Th' in-

Th' innumerable train of Persian ghosts  
 To Pluto's dreary shade, unless reserv'd 285  
 From all this ruin to lament his shame,  
 And future flight, when Greece confounds that  
 pow'r,

Which we will shake. But now the second watch  
 Is verging to its period, and the moon  
 Prepares to glimmer on our darksome steps. 290  
 Let each his head distinguish with a wreath  
 Of twining laurel; then the goblet crown,  
 And share the victim. Take your last repast,  
 For with your fathers, and the heroes old  
 You next shall banquet in the blest abodes. 295

WHILE thus the hero, through the thronging  
 files

Presenting round a hideous depth of war  
 All shook with ardour their erected spears  
 Thick, as the fruitful growth of lofty pines; 299  
 Which from high Pelion's cloud-invested brow  
 To heav'n's blue vault their stately honours bear.  
 Megistias soon through all the band divides

The

The sacred laurel: snatch'd with eager zeal,  
 By ev'ry hand, and round each helmet wove,  
 It blends its verdure with the floating plumes. 305  
 Then is the victim portion'd, while the bowl  
 Flows with the vine's impurpled stream. Aloof  
 The Theban train in wan dejection mute  
 Brood o'er their shame, or cast a frightened eye  
 On that determin'd virtue, which unmov'd 310  
 At fate's approach with chearful lips could taste  
 The sparkling goblet, and with joy partake  
 That last and glorious banquet. Ev'n the heart  
 Of Anaxander now forgets its wiles,  
 Its fear no more dissembling. Agis here 315  
 For ever mindful of his friend's command  
 Mix'd with the Thebans, and in whispers thus.

LEONIDAS permits you to retire.  
 While in the rites of sacrifice employ'd  
 None heed your motions. Separate, and fly 320  
 With silent steps. At once the Theban troop  
 Its ranks dissolving from the Greeks withdraws.  
 Unseen it moulders from the host, like snow.

Which

Which from the mountains in ten thousand rills,  
 Soon as the sun exerts his orient beam,      325  
 Descends soft-trickling, while the hoary heap  
 Insensibly decays. The Grecians soon  
 Conclude the solemn banquet, and their chief  
 Now reassumes his arms. Before his step  
 The croud rolls backward. In their gladden'd sight  
 His crest irradiate with the'uplifted brands      331  
 Its purple splendour shakes. The tow'ring oak  
 Thus from a lofty promontory waves  
 Its majesty of verdure, while with joy  
 The sailor marks its heav'n-ascending pride,      335  
 Which from afar directs his foamy course  
 Along the pathless Ocean; so the Greeks  
 Exulting gaz'd, as down their op'ning ranks  
 Their chief proceeds; from whose majestic grace  
 A soul like thine, O Phidias, might conceive      340  
 In Parian marble, or effulgent brass,  
 The form of great Apollo; when the god,  
 Won by the pray'rs of man's afflicted race,  
 In arms forsook his lucid throne to pierce  
 The monster Python in the Delphian vale      345  
Chose



Close by the hero Polydorus waits  
 To guide destruction through the Asian tents.  
 As the young eagle near his parent's side  
 In wanton flight eassys his vig'rous wings,  
 E'er long with her to penetrate the clouds, 350  
 To dart impetuous on the fleecy train,  
 And dye his beak with gore; by Sparta's king  
 The injur'd Polydorus thus prepares  
 His arm for death, and feasts his angry soul  
 With promis'd vengeance: his impatient thoughts  
 Ev'n now transport him furious to the seat 356  
 Of his long sorrows not with shackled hands,  
 But now once more a Spartan with his shield  
 And dreadful spear to lead his country's bands,  
 And with them vengeance. Nor the rest of Greece  
 Neglect to form. Their helmets now unite 361  
 Their various plumage, as th' intertwining boughs  
 Mix their broad foliage in Dodona's grove;  
 Or like the cedars on the Syrian hills,  
 Which with their shady texture, as with night, 365  
 The gloomy soil o'ercastr. In order'd ranks  
 While thus they stand, behold a warlyke form



In gleaming arms slow-moving through the shade,  
 Led by a slave, approach'd Laconia's king,  
 And thus address'd him. O Leonidas, 370  
 Thou seest before thee Eurytus; a name  
 To thee and ev'ry Spartan not unknown.  
 Thy ruling voice forbade the maim'd to stay;  
 I, whose dark orbs no longer know the sun,  
 Immers'd in sudden blindness since our march 375  
 From Lacedæmon, with the rest withdrew,  
 Not to revisit Sparta, but, resolv'd  
 To meet the Persians, in the public way  
 I sat; not long, before th' increasing sound 379  
 Of trampling feet alarm'd me, which I deem'd  
 Were Persia's numbers rushing from the hills:  
 I started upward grasping in my hand  
 My spear and buckler, by my slave withheld,  
 Who told me, they were Thebans. Lo! I bear  
 The tidings of their flight. And now, my chief  
 And countrymen, farewell. Do you proceed, 386  
 With death and terrour fill the hostile camp;  
 While I the fury of th' exulting foe  
 Descending from the mountains here await

To yield the last remains of tedious life 390

Now to my country useleſs, and to me,

And cloſe theſe ſhaded eyes in endless night;

He ceas'd, when thus Leonidas began.

Then ſtay, my faithful ſoldier, and obtain

Not the leaſt honours in this glorious night; 395

And you, my brave aſſociates, all exult;

One ſpirit now inſpires us; from our band

Doubt, fear, and treaſon with the Thebans fly;

While all with mutual confidence advance,

And equal fires. This ſaid, once more the king

On the deep phalanx his attentive eye 401

Reverts, and through the ruddy gleam deſcries

One face of gladneſs; but th' illuſtrious van

He moſt contemplates: Agis, Alpheus there,

Megiftias, Maron, and Platæa's chief, 405

Dieneces, Demophilus are drawn,

And Dithyrambus. They their fixed fight

On him too bend with inexpressive joy,

With love, and veneration, till they hear

His laſt command; when inſtant to the earth 410

Are cast th' extinguish'd brands. On all around  
Drops sudden darkness, on the hills, the woods,  
The silver stream, the rocks, and floating main.  
It now was midnight. To the hostile camp  
With steps compos'd and silent down the pass 415  
The phalanx moves. Each patient bosom hush'd  
Its struggling spirit, nor in whispers breath'd  
The rapt'rous ardour, virtue then inspir'd;  
But all await the moment doom'd to give  
The Barb'rous millions to their deathful steel: 420  
So low'ring clouds expanding from the north  
Awhile suspend their horrors, destin'd soon  
To blaze in lightnings, and to burst in storms.

*End of the eighth Book.*

# LEONIDAS.

## BOOK IX.

### The Argument.

*Leonidas and the Grecians penetrate through the Persian camp to the very pavilion of Xerxes, who avoids destruction by flight. The Barbarians are slaughter'd in great multitudes, and their camp is set on fire. Leonidas conducts his men back to Thermopylæ, engages the Persians, who were descended from the hills, and after numberless proofs of superior strength and valour sinks down cover'd with wounds, and expires the last of all the Grecian commanders.*

THE waining moon display'd her gleaming  
horns,

When o'er th' unguarded bound of Asia's camp

Now pass'd the Grecians. Through th' unnumber'd  
tents,

Where all was mute and tranquil, they pursue  
Their silent march. The eastern world around 5  
Lay stretch'd in slumber, motionless, and deaf,  
Wrapt in the dead security of night,  
Nor mark'd the steps of Fate. The wary Greeks  
By Polydorus guided still proceed.  
Ev'n to the center of th' extensive host 10  
Unseen they pierc'd, when now th' imperial tent  
Yet distant rose before them. Wide around  
The proud pavilion stretch'd an ample space,  
Where myriads might imbattle. Here a band  
Of chosen Persians watchful round their king 15  
Held their nocturnal station. As the hearts  
Of anxious nations menac'd with the waste  
Of meager famine, and the ruthless sword  
Sink in their frozen bosoms, while despair  
Sees fear-ingender'd fantoms in the sky, 20  
Aërial hosts amid the clouds array'd,  
Which seem to shake the firmament with war,  
Portending woe and death; the Persians thus  
Are smote with consternation, as the moon  
By her faint beam discover'd from afar 25

The



The glimpse of Grecian arms, With sudden cries,  
 They waken Horror, which to Xerxes' couch,  
 And o'er th' astonish'd host, swift-winged flew  
 Dispelling sleep and silence. All the camp  
 Pours forth its numbers naked, pale, unarm'd, 30  
 Wild with amazement, blinded by dismay,  
 To ev'ry foe obnoxious; when at once,  
 Plung'd in ten thousand breasts, the Grecian steel  
 Reeks with destruction. Deluges of blood  
 Float o'er the field, and foam around the heaps 35  
 Of wretches slain unconscious of the hand,  
 Which mows them down by legions. From his couch  
 The lord of Asia, and of Lybia starts,  
 (Amaze, affright, distraction in his look)  
 And sees in thought united Greece advance. 40  
 Where then was fled thy empty regal pride,  
 The hope of glory, and the lust of pow'r?  
 What then avail'd th' innumerable range  
 Of thy huge camp save only to conceal  
 Thy trembling steps, O Xerxes, while thou fleest.  
 Leonidas before the Grecian van 46  
 Through bleeding thousands hews his dreadful way.

Before him Terroure strides. Gigantic Death,  
And Desolation at his side attend,  
With all the Furies of insatiate war. 50  
To Xerxes' tent the hero speeds, nor finds  
His victim. Ardent throngs of Grecians fill  
The stately mansion; to the ground are hurl'd  
The glitt'ring ensigns of imperial pow'r:  
The diadem, the scepter, late ador'd 55  
And fear'd by millions, underneath their feet  
With mingled rage and scorn the Grecians crush,  
A sacrifice to Freedom. Now return  
The furious bands. Leonidas exalts  
For new destruction his resistless spear, 60  
When sudden night o'erfrouds the spangled heav'ns,  
And clouds condensing intercept the moon.  
Black o'er the furrow'd main the raging east  
In whirlwinds sweeps the surge. Now roars the coast,  
The crashing forests, and the cavern'd rocks. 65  
Swift through the camp the hurricane impells  
Its dire career, when Asia's numbers, veil'd  
Amid the shelt'ring horrors of the storm,  
Evade the Spartan lance. The Grecians halt,

By

By great Leonidas restrain'd and wait 70  
Near Xerxes' tent their mighty leader's will.

BESIDE the high pavilion from the time,  
That Xerxes near Thermopylae had drawn  
His num'rous bands, perpetual fire had shone;  
Before whose sacred light the Persian lord 75  
Was wont among his Magi to adore  
The pow'r of Oromasdes: piles of wood  
Lay nigh, prepar'd to feed the constant flame.  
These on the altar by the Greeks are strewn,  
So wills Laconia's hero; while the winds 80  
Excite the blaze, his phalanx he divides;  
Four bands are form'd, by Dithyrambus led,  
By Alpheus, by Diomedon, the last  
Himself commands. The word is giv'en; the Greeks  
Press to the fire; soon shrink the burning heaps; 85  
Destructive flames they brandish, and, injoin'd  
To reassemble at the regal tent,  
By various paths the hostile camp invade.

RESISTLESS desolation now involves  
The Malian fields, as o'er the eastern tents 90  
From different stations flew ten thousand brands

Hurl'd by the Greeks unrespited. The winds

With violence redoubled breathing round

Tempestuous rage exasperate the blaze.

The conflagration, like a sea, expands;

95

Collected now from ev'ry part it forms

One waving surface of unbounded fire.

In ruddy volumes mount the curling flames

To heav'n's dark vault, and paint the midnight clouds.

So, when the north emits its purpled lights,

100

The undulating radiance streaming wide,

As with a burning canopy, invests

Th' ethereal concave. Oeta now disclos'd

Its forehead glitt'ring with eternal frost,

While down the rocks the foamy torrents shone.

105

Far o'er the main the pointed rays were thrown;

Night snatch'd her mantle from the ocean's breast;

The billows glimmer from the distant shores.

But where ascends a pillar huge of smoke

With wreathing flames incircled, Horror there

And Death on great Leonidas attend.

111

He bade th' exulting Polydorus lead,

Where Asia's horse and chariots stood arrang'd;

There



There at his word devouring Vulcan feasts  
 On all the tribute, which Theſſalia's meads 115  
 Yield to the ſcythe, and riots on the heaps  
 Of Ceres emptied of the ripen'd grain.  
 A flood of fire envelopes all the ground;  
 The cordage burſts of ev'ry blazing tent; 119  
 Down ſink the roofs, and overwhelm the throng  
 Of wretches panting from the Spartan ſword,  
 Cloſe-wedg'd with fear; the Libyan chariot burns,  
 Th' Arabian camel, and the Perſian ſteed  
 Bound through the fiery deluge; wild with pain  
 They ſhake their ſinged manes, with madd'ning hoofs  
 Daſh through the blood of thouſands, mix'd with  
 flames, 126

That rage augmented by the whirlwind's blaſt.

MEANTIME the ſcepter'd lord of half the globe  
 Through the wide tumult, like a guilty ſlave,  
 From tent to tent precipitates his flight. 130  
 Diſpers'd are all his ſatrapſ; Pride itſelf  
 Shuns his dejected brow; Deſpair alone  
 With pale Confuſion, and with frantic Fear  
 Wait on th' imperial fugitive, and ſhew,

As



As round the camp his eye distracted roves, 135

No limits to destruction. Now was seen

Aurora mounting from the eastern hills

In rosy sandals, and with dewy locks :

The winds subside before her, darkness flies,

And streams of light proclaim the chearful day. 140

When now at Xerxes' tent the Grecian band

Was re-united. What could Fortune more

To aid the valiant, and to gorge revenge?

Lo! Desolation o'er the Persian host

Hath emptied all its horrors; ev'n the hand 145

Of languid Slaughter drops its crimson steel;

Nor Nature longer can sustain the toil

Of ever-during conquest. Yet what pow'r

Among the Grecians once again reviv'd

Their drooping warmth; new-brac'd their nerves,

and call'd 150

Their wearied swords to deeds of brighter fame?

What, but th'inspiring hope of glorious death

To crown their labour, and th'auspicious look

Of their heroic chief, which still unchang'd,

Still with superior majesty declar'd, 155

No

No toil had yet relax'd his matchless strength,  
 Nor worn the vigour of his godlike soul.  
 Down to the pass with gentle march he leads  
 Th' imbattled warriors. There behind the shrubs,  
 Which near the verdant feet of Oeta sprung, 160  
 Beside the entrance of the straits the Greeks  
 In ambush lay. The tempest now was calm'd;  
 Soft breezes only from the Malian wave  
 O'er each grim face, besmear'd with smoke and gore,  
 Their cool refreshment breath'd. The healing gale  
 Dispells the languor from their harass'd limbs, 166  
 Which swell with strength returning. After all  
 Th' incessant labours of the horrid night,  
 Through flames and war continu'd, they prepare  
 In order'd battle to confront the pow'rs 170  
 Of Hyperanthes, that selected band  
 From Asia's numbers, destin'd with the morn  
 To pass the mountains in triumphant march  
 With strength unwasted, and with souls elate.  
 Not long the Greeks in expectation stood 175  
 Impatient. Sudden with tumultuous shouts,  
 Like Nile's swift current, where with deafning roar

Prone

Prone from the steep of Elephantis falls;  
Its sea of waters, Hyperanthes pours  
His rapid legions o'er the Grecian camp 180  
Down from the hills precipitant. No foe  
Is found to stop the torrent; on they roll  
With thund'ring footsteps o'er the sounding pass.

THAT night no sooner had the Theban train  
Thermopylæ forsaken, but their course 185  
They bent along the mountains, till they met  
The pow'rs of Xerxes. Dusky twilight still  
Prevailing, Persia with misguided rage  
Affail'd her friends unknown. Th' impetuous spear  
Of Hyperanthes clove the faithless heart 190  
Of Anaxander; on, the hero press'd,  
And spread destruction through their bleeding ranks;  
Nor check'd his ardent valour, till he heard  
The name of Thebes in suppliant cries proclaim'd:  
The Persians then receive 'hem, in the front 195  
As guides they place them, and, amaz'd to learn,  
That daring Geece shoul' Xerxes' camp invade,  
Haste from the mountains, rush along the pass,

And

And now tumultuous issue from its mouth.  
 At once Laconia's leader gives the sign, 200  
 When, as th' impulsive ram with dreadful sway  
 O'erturns the nodding rampart from its base,  
 And strews a town with ruin, so the band  
 Of ferried heroes down the Malian steep,  
 An hideous depth, the blended numbers swept 205  
 Of Thebes and Persia. There no waters flow,  
 But horrid rocks present their craggy sides;  
 There dash'd whole legions. From their mangled  
 limbs  
 A tide of blood rolls foaming to the sea.  
 Again thy voice, Leonidas, is heard; 210  
 The Grecians turn; against the op'ning pass  
 They point their wheeling phalanx; on they rush:  
 Astonish'd Persia stops in full career,  
 Ev'n Hyperanthes starts with terrour back.  
 Confusion drives fresh numbers from the shore, 215  
 Whelm'd in the Malian slime. Th' undaunted king  
 Of Lacedæmon enter'd now the straits,  
 And rang'd for battle. Hyperanthes soon  
 Recall'd his chosen warriors from their fear.



Swift on the great Leonidas was bent 220

A grove of darts; th' incourt'ring armies clos'd.

WHOM first, whom last, great Spartan, didst  
thou foil?

What rivers heard along their echoing banks

Thy name in curses sounded from the lips

Of mothers wailing for their slaughter'd sons! 225

What towns with empty monuments were fill'd

For those, whom thy unconquerable sword

This day to vultures cast! First Bessus died,

An haughty satrap, whose tyrannic hand

Despoil'd Hyrcania of her golden sheaves, 230

And laid her forests waste. For him the bees

Among the branches interwove their sweets;

For him the fig was ripen'd, and the vine

With rich profusion o'er the goblet foam'd.

Then Dinis bled. On Hermus' side he reign'd, 235

And long had fought with unavailing love

Great Artemisia fam'd in Xerxes' fleet,

The martial queen of Caria. She disdain'd

The lover's soft complaint; her dauntless ear

Was



Book IX. L E O N I D A S. 241

Was taught to mark the tempest, while it rag'd:  
Her fight was practis'd from the rolling deck 241  
To brave the chafing billows; doom'd to meet  
That day of horror, when the weeping eye  
Of Xerxes saw the blood of nations flow,  
And to its bottom tinge the briny floods 245  
Of Salamis, whence she with Asia fled,  
She only not inglorious: low reclines  
Her lover now, on Hermus' banks no more  
To sound her name, nor tell the vocal groves  
His fruitless sorrows. Then Madauces fell, 250  
A Paphlagonian born amid the sound  
Of dashing surges, and the roar of winds;  
Who o'er th' inhospitable Euxine waves  
Was wont from high Carambis' cliff to watch  
Th' ill-fated bark, which cut the Pontic stream,  
Then with his dire associates through the deep 256  
For spoil and slaughter guide his hostile prow.  
With these Tithraustes far from Medus fall'n,  
His native tide, with blooming strength indu'd,  
And manly grace, Lilæus, who had left 260  
The balmy fragrance of Arabia's fields,

And Babylonian Tenagon expir'd.  
His bravest friends on ev'ry side o'erthrown  
With indignation Hyperanthes view'd,  
And in fierce haste his dauntless arm oppos'd 265  
To Sparta's hero. Each his lance protends,  
But thousands rush with interposing shields,  
Such sacred lives all anxious to defend;  
Or thither fortune urg'd the tide of war,  
Their term protracting for augmented fame. 270  
So, when two gallies lab'ring through the foam  
Present for battle their destructive beaks,  
The billows oft, by hurricanes impell'd,  
With mountainous commotion dash between,  
And either bark in black'ning tempests veil'd 275  
Waft from its distant foe. But fiercer burn'd  
Thy arduor, mighty Spartan, while in blood  
Thy falchion rag'd unwearied. Now the steeds  
Of day were climbing their meridian steep,  
And o'er the Persian camp the shouts of war 280  
Burst from Thermopylæ. Pharnuchus heard,  
Who from his couch beyond the Malian plain,  
Rous'd by the tumult in the neighb'ring tents,

To

Book IX.    L E O N I D A S.    243

To aid his lord had left Thessalia's fields  
With Syria, Cholchis, and Armenia's bands,    285  
Th' Assyrians, and Chaldæans. Asia's camp  
Was still the seat of terrour and despair.  
As in some fruitful clime, which late hath known  
The rage of winds and floods, when now the storm  
Is heard no longer and the deluge fled,    290  
Still o'er the wasted region Nature mourns  
In melancholy silence, through the grove  
With prostrate glories lie the stately oak  
And elm uprooted, while the plains are spread    294  
With fragments swept from villages o'erthrown,  
And round the pastures flocks and herds are cast  
In weltring heaps of death; so Persia's host  
In horror mute one boundless scene displays  
Of desolation: half devour'd by fire  
Its tall pavilions, and its warlike cars    300  
Hide all the field with ruin; here in gore  
Its princes lie, and nameless thousands there,  
Here legions bleeding by the Grecian steel,  
There Persians slain by Persians still declare  
The wild confusion of the direful night,    305

When

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When

When wanting signals, and their leaders care  
They rush'd to mutual slaughter. Xerxes' tent  
On its exalted summit, when the dawn  
First streaks the glowing sky, was wont to bear  
The gloden form of Mithra, clos'd between 310  
Two lucid crystals, to the Barb'rous host  
An awful signal all in arms to leave  
Their crouded tents, and numberless to wait  
Their monarch's presence; this Pharnuchus rears  
High on the proud pavilion: at the sight 315  
Their consternation is at length dispell'd,  
And through th' assembling nations hope revives.  
Pharnuchus then from all the number forms  
A chosen train; Thermopylæ he seeks;  
Their march in loudest clamours is proclaim'd. 320  
His phalanx soon Leonidas commands  
To circle backward from the Malian shore:  
Their order changes; now half-orb'd they stand  
By Oeta's mountains guarded from behind  
With either flank united to the rock. 325  
As, by th' excelling architect dispos'd  
To shield some haven, a stupendous mole,

Fram'd

Book IX.      L E O N I D A S.      245

Fram'd of the grove and quarry's mingled strength,  
In ocean's bosom penetrates afar;      329

There stands the pride of art against the weight  
Of seas, unmov'd, and breaks the whelming surge:  
So, when Pharnuchus with innum'rous pow'rs  
Thermopylæ had fill'd, th' unyielding Greeks  
Oppos'd the hostile deluge, and its rage,

Unshaken stem'd. Amid the foremost rank      335  
Leonidas his dreadful station held.

Before him soon an horrid void is seen  
Through Persia's legions, and the proud remains  
Of noblest chiefs th' insanguin'd rock bestrew.

Pharnuchus glowing with revenge and wrath      340  
Discharges full at Lacedæmon's chief

His iron-studded mace. Aside it glanc'd,  
Turn'd by the massy shield, and prone to earth  
The Persian fell. Alcander to the rock

Transfix'd the prostrate satrap through the reins,  
Himself receiving in th' unguarded side      346

The lance of Hyperanthes. Low he lies,  
The only Theban, who by Sparta's king  
Abode intrepid, and to Greece preserv'd



246      L E O N I D A S.      Book IX.

His faith untainted; a physician sage,      350

Who from Cithæron each benignant herb

Was wont to gather, and expatiate o'er

The Heliconian pastures, where no plant

Of poison springs, but such, whose healing juice

Expells the venom from the viper's tooth      355

Fill'd with the sweetness of the soil divine:

Him all, who languish on the bed of pain,

Him most, the wretch, whom want, and sickness  
spreads

On earth's cold breast neglected, shall deplore.

On him the brave Artontes sinks in death,      360

Renown'd through wide Bithynia, now no more

The clam'rous rites of Cybele to share,

While Echo murmurs through the hallow caves

Of Berecynthian Dindymus. The hand

Of Alpheus sent him to the shades of night.      365

E'er from the dead he disingag'd his spear,

Huge Abradates glorying in his strength,

Surpassing all of Cissian race, advanc'd

To grapple with the victor; near him now

His foremost step the Persian plants, his band      370

Grasps

Grasps at the Spartan's shoulder.    Alpheus once  
 At Nemea's games the wrestlers crown obtain'd,  
 His art he summons, and his rapid foot  
 Obliquely strikes against the Persian's heel;  
 He falling seiz'd on Alpheus' neck, and drag'd 375  
 His foe upon him.    Streight an hundred darts  
 Of thronging Persia cleave the Grecian's back.  
 To Abradates' breast the weapons pierce,  
 And rivet both in death.    This Maron saw,  
 And Polydorus, who with victims fall'n    380  
 Before their vengeance hide their brother's corse.  
 At length the gen'rous blood of Maron warms  
 The lance of Hyperanthes.    On the spear  
 Of Polydorus falls the pond'rous ax  
 Of Sacian Mardus; from the yielding wood    385  
 The steely points is sever'd.    Undismay'd  
 The Spartan stoops to rear the knotted mace  
 Of slain Pharnuchus; but thy fatal sword,  
 Abrocomes, that dreadful instant marks  
 To rend his op'ning side; unconquer'd still,    390  
 Swift he discharges on the Sacian's front  
 An horrid wound, that reach'd the bursting brain.

Down his own limbs the while a torrent flows  
Of vital crimson; smiling he surveys  
His sorrows ending, and his Spartan name 395  
Renew its lustre. Sudden to his side  
Springs Dithyrambus; through th' uplifted arm  
Of Mindus pointing his impetuous dart  
Against the bleeding Spartan he impells  
His steel resistless. Polydorus now 400  
Stretch'd his cold hand to Thespia's friendly chief,  
Then bow'd his head in everlasting peace;  
And Mindus wafted by his flowing wound  
Beside him faints and dies. In Ninus old  
Had his exalted ancestors sustain'd 405  
Th' Assyrian scepter. Now to Persia's throne  
A tributary lord he rul'd the vales,  
Where Tigris swift between the parted hills  
Of tall Niphâtes draws its foaming tide  
Impregnating the glebe. At once a croud 410  
Of ardent Persians seize the conqueror's lance:  
An hundred arms infold it. Thespia's youth  
With one strong hand maintains the struggling spear,  
The other bares his falchion. Through his foes,  
With

Book IX.      L E O N I D A S.      249

With lightning wing'd it, scatters wounds and death.

Artáphrenes in torture feels his arm      416

Lopt from the shoullder. Zatis leaves his hand

Yet twining round the long-disputed lance.

On Pheron's neck descends the pond'rous blade;

Down drops the fever'd head; the vital stream      420

Spouts from its purple sluices. Mardon strides

Across the pointed ash. His weight o'ercomes

The wearied Grecian, who resigns his hold,

Yet cleaves th' exulting Persian to the brain.

But now the fierce Abrócomes approach'd,      425

And louring shakes his dart. The wary Greek

With his broad buckler intercepts the stroke,

And closes with the Persian. Then what aid

Of mortal force, or interposing heav'n

Preserv'd the eastern warrior? Lo! the friend      430

Of Teribazus eager to avenge

His lov'd companion, and at once to guard

A brother's life, beneath the sinewy arm,

That instant rais'd for slaughter, plung'd his lance

In Dithyrambus' side. The vital strings      435

At once relax; nor Fame, nor Greece demand

More from his valour, and supine he lies  
In glories ripen'd on his blooming head.  
Him shall the Thespian virgins in their songs  
Record once loveliest of the youthful train, 440  
The good, the gentle, generous, and brave;  
Now fall'n his country's grace, and parent's pride:  
So sinks the cedar, which in verdant bloom  
High on the top of Libanus had stood  
The mountain's boast, and glory of the grove; 445  
Then to adorn the mansions of the great,  
Or dignify some god's high-vaulted fane  
Uprooted low'rs its heav'n-aspiring head.  
Diomedon bursts forward. Round his friend  
He heaps destruction. What a troop of ghosts 450  
Attend thy shade, fall'n hero! Long unmatch'd  
Prevail'd his vengeful arm, and Persia bled;  
Till four Assyrians on his shelving lance,  
E'er yet extracted from a prostrate corse,  
Their pond'rous maces all discharge. It broke. 455  
Yet with the truncheon of his shatter'd spear  
The Greek sustains the contest. Through his eye  
The shiver'd fragment penetrates the brain



Of one bold warrior; there the splinty wood  
 Infix'd remains: the hero then unsheaths      460  
 His falchion broad; a second views aghast  
 His entrails falling, while Platæa's chief  
 From the gash'd belly draws his reeking sword:  
 Prone sinks a third beneath the falchion's weight;  
 Though with the furious stroke the yielding blade  
 Flew from the hilt, and left the Greek disarm'd: 466  
 The fourth that instant lifts his knotted mace;  
 It falls resistless on the batter'd helm,  
 And low the great Diomedon extends  
 His mighty limbs. So, weaken'd by the force 470  
 Of some tremendous engine, which the hand  
 Of Mars impells, a stately turret spreads  
 Its disuniting ramparts on the plain;  
 Joy fills th' assailants, while the battle's tide  
 Whelms o'er the widening breach. The Persians thus  
 O'er the late-fear'd Diomedon had rush'd,      476  
 And swept the Greeks before them; when behold  
 Leonidas! At once their ardour froze.  
 He had a while within the orb retir'd,  
 Oppress'd by labour. Now with strength restor'd 480

He

He pours fresh ruin from the Spartan front.  
As, long retarded by th' unmoving calm,  
Soon, as a rising gale fresh-breathing curls  
The surging main, again the vessel bounds  
With all her op'ning sails; the hero thus 485  
His buckler huge, and formidable spear  
Advancing, through the Asian files renews  
His course of slaughter. Destiny compells  
The bold Hydarnes to th' unequal fight,  
Who proudly vaunting left his weeping bride 490  
To mourn his absence on the distant verge  
Of Bactrian Ochus. Victory in vain  
He parting promis'd. Wanton hope no more  
Round his cold heart delusive sports, nor paints  
Th' imagin'd pomp of triumphs, gorgeous spoils,  
And trains of shackled Greeks. The Spartan pierc'd  
His shield, and bursting corselet. From the slain  
The victor draws his iron-pointed spear  
Bent, and infeebl'd with the forceful blow.  
Meantime within his buckler's verge, unseen 500  
Amphistreus stealing, in th' unguarded flank  
His poniard struck. With swift effusion gush'd

A crimson torrent, but the scaly mail  
 Immediate death repell'd. Th' indignant king  
 Gripes with resistless might the Persian's throat, 505  
 And drags him prostrate. None in Xerxes' court  
 Was more corrupt, with insolence more base,  
 With rancour more fallacious. Phrygia pin'd  
 Beneath th' oppression of his ruthless sway.  
 Was there a field once fruitful, or a town 510  
 Once populous and rich? The horrid change  
 To want and desolation there declar'd,  
 The curs'd Amphistreus govern'd. As the spear  
 Of Tyrian Cadmus riveted to earth  
 The pois'nous dragon, whose infectious breath, 515  
 Had blasted half Bœotia; so the chief  
 Of Lacedæmon trampling on the neck  
 Of fall'n Amphistreus fixes to the rock  
 The gasping tyrant, and his broken lance  
 Leaves in the panting corse. Meanwhile thy wound  
 Incessant flows, great hero, and augments 521  
 The hopes of Persia, Thou unyielding still  
 Sustain'st the contest, while unnumber'd darts  
 Are shiver'd on thy buckler, and thy feet

With

With glitt'ring points bestrew; the Cholchian sword  
 And Persian dagger leave their shatter'd hilts; 526  
 Bent is the Caspian scymetar; in vain  
 The Sacian wheels his falchion, and their mace  
 The strong Chaldaeans and Assyrians raise:  
 Thou stand'st unshaken, like a Thracian hill, 530  
 Like Rhodopé, or Hæmus; where in vain  
 The thund'rer plants his livid bolt, in vain  
 The glancing lightning cleaves th' incrusted snow,  
 And Winter beating with eternal war  
 Shakes from his dreary wings discordant storms, 535  
 Chill fleet, and clatt'ring hail. But now advanc'd  
 Abrocómes, and aim'd his deadly spear  
 Against the forehead of Laconia's chief,  
 Not unperceiv'd; the Spartan's active hand  
 His sword opposing upward rears the blade 540  
 Against the threatening javelin; o'er his crest  
 Its fury wastes in air, while swift descends  
 The pond'rous falchion on the Persian's knee:  
 At once the bone is sever'd; prone he falls;  
 Crush'd on the ground beneath ten thousand feet, 545  
 The gallant warrior breaths the last remains

Book IX: L E O N I D A S. 255

Of tortur'd life. The Spartan thus maintain'd  
 Th' unequal combat with his single sword.  
 But Agis calls Diéneces, alarms  
 Demophilus, Megistias; they from heaps 550  
 Of Allarodian and Sasperian slain  
 Haste to their leader, and before him raise  
 The brazen bulwark of their massy shields.  
 The foremost line of Asia stands and bleeds;  
 The rest recoil: but Hyperanthes strides 555  
 From rank to rank throughout his various host,  
 Their dying hopes rekindles, in the brave  
 Excites new valour, and the freezing heart  
 Of Fear revives. Aftaspes first obey'd  
 The hero's voice, a fierce Chaldaean lord 560  
 Vain of his birth from antient Belus drawn,  
 Proud of his wealthy stores, and stately domes;  
 But now more proud by conquest, since his might  
 Had foil'd the strong Diomedon. He seeks  
 The front of battle. His victorious mace 565  
 Against the brave Diéneces he bends;  
 The weighty blow bore down th' opposing shield,  
 And crush'd the Spartan's shoulder: idle hangs

The



The buckler now, and loads th' inactive arm  
Depriv'd of all its functions. Agis bares 570

His vengeful blade, and severs from the foe  
His hand exalted for a second stroke.

The dying fingers with convulsive grasp  
The falling mace infold. A Sacian chief  
Springs on the victor. Iaxartes' banks 575

To this brave savage gave his name and birth.

His looks erect, and fierce deportment spoke

A bold and gallant spirit, but untam'd,

With dreary wilds familiar, and a race

Of rude Barbarians horrid as their clime. 580

The hostile spear, against his forehead aim'd,

Glanc'd upward, and o'erturn'd his iron cone:

The blow renew'd his bursting chest divides.

Th' undaunted Sacian writhes along the lance,

Which griding passes through his breast and back,

A barbed arrow from his quiver draws, 585

Deep in the streaming pap of Agis hides

The deadly steel, then grimly smiles and dies.

From him Fate hastens to a nobler prey;

For lo! the brave Diénece presents 590

His

IX. Book IX. LEONIDAS. 257

His breast obnoxious to a thousand darts,  
 570 The shield deserts his unsustaining arm,  
 And slides to earth. A grove of javelins rose  
 On his broad bosom. Still for ev'ry wound  
 He hurl'd a Persian to th' infernal gloom; 595  
 But life at length forsook his riven heart,  
 575 And o'er the rock the gasping hero stretch'd  
 His dying limbs in gore. Who now can stand  
 The torrent of Barbarians? Agis bleeds,  
 His spear is irrecoverably plung'd 600  
 In Iaxartes' body. Low reclines  
 580 Diéneces in blood. The Spartan chief,  
 Himself o'erlabour'd, of his lance disarm'd,  
 The rage of Death can exercise no more.  
 One last and glorious effort age performs: 605  
 Demophilus, Megistias join their might,  
 And stem the floods of conquest; while the spear  
 586 Of slain Diéneces to Sparta's king  
 The fainting Agis bears. The blazing steel  
 In that dire hand again for battle rear'd 610  
 Blasts all the Persian valour. Back in heaps  
 590 They roll confounded, by their leader's voice  
 His S In

In vain exhorted longer to endure  
The ceaseless waste of that unconquer'd arm.  
So, when the giants from Olympus chas'd 615  
Th' inferiour gods, themselves in terrour shun'd  
Th' incessant streams of lightning, when the hand  
Of heav'n's great father with eternal might  
Sustain'd the direful conflict. O'er the field  
Awhile Bellona stills the rage of war; 620  
When Thespia's leader, and Megistias drop  
At either side of Lacedæmon's king.  
Beneath the weight of years and labour bend  
The hoary warriors. Not a groan molests  
Their parting spirits, but in death's calm night, 625  
All-silent bows each venerable head:  
Like aged oaks, whose deep-descending roots  
Had pierc'd resistless through the mountain's side,  
And there for three long centuries had brav'd  
Each angry gust of Eurus, and the North; 630  
Till, sapless now by Time's despoiling hand,  
Without a blast their mossy trunks recline  
Before their parent hill. By Sparta's chief  
None now remains but Agis, who implores

## Book IX. LEONIDAS. 259

The last kind office from his godlike friend, 635

The Sacian's arrow from his pap to draw.

615

This done, life issues with the sanguine tide.

d

Thy comely features, Agis, now are pale;

nd

Cold are thy graceful limbs, and dim thy eyes,

Which now no more with placid beams reveal 640

The native virtues of thy gentle breast.

620

The noble corse Leonidas surveys.

Fate yields him one short interval of peace

To know how lovely are the patriot's wounds,

And see those honours grace the man, he lov'd. 645

But Hyperanthes with his single spear

625

Forth from the trembling ranks of Asia tow'rs

His country's glory to redeem, or fall.

The Spartan worn by toil his languid arm

de,

Once more uplifting waits the dauntless prince. 650

The heroes now stood adverse. Each a while

630

Restrain'd his valour, and his godlike foe

Admiring view'd. Such majesty and strength

To fierce Pelides all incircled round

With Trojan dead; and such to Priam's son 655

By struggling virtue, and by manly shame

The



From flight recall'd, great Homer's fancy gave.  
 O thou exalted o'er the laurel'd train  
 High, as the sweet Calliope is thron'd  
 Above each virgin of the tuneful hill; 660  
 Now let one beam of thy celestial light  
 Dart through my lab'ring mind; lest Freedom mourn  
 Her chosen son dishonour'd in these strains!

Now Hyperanthes, and Laconia's king  
 With brandish'd points, and targets high uprear'd  
 Commence the fatal combat, which must close 666  
 The long-continu'd horrors of the day.  
 Fix'd with amaze and fear, the Asian files  
 Unmov'd and silent on their bucklers pause.  
 Thus o'er th' expanse of India's wilds contend 670  
 The elephant, and horn'd rhinoceros;  
 Earth groans beneath them, as with-wrath untam'd  
 Each hideous bulk in dire encounter meets:  
 With distant terror gaze the savage throng,  
 Prolong'd by varied art, the dubious fight 675  
 The great event suspended. On the foe  
 His well-aim'd spear a last the Spartan drove,

And



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And pierc'd the shield. Inexorable fate  
That moment hover'd o'er the eastern prince,  
When with unmatch'd celerity aside 680  
He swung his buckler; underneath his arm,  
Unstain'd with blood the hostile javelin pass'd:  
Meantime, with joy, and ardent hopes elate  
Of fame and conquest, sudden he impell'd  
His rapid lance against the Spartan's throat; 685  
But he with wary skill his target rais'd,  
And o'er his shoulder turn'd the glancing steel;  
For one last effort then his scatter'd strength  
Recall'd, and wheeling with resistless force  
His massy buckler dash'd the brazen verge 690  
Against the Persian's forehead: down he sunk  
Without a groan expiring, as o'erwhelm'd  
Beneath a marble fragment from its seat  
Heav'd by a whirlwind sweeping o'er the ridge  
Of some aspiring mansion. Gen'rous prince! 695  
What could his valour more? His single might  
He match'd with great Leonidas, and fell  
Before his native bands. The Spartan chief  
Now stands alone. In heaps his slaughter'd friends

All

All stretch'd around him lie. The distant foes 700  
Show'r on his head innumerable darts.  
From various sluices gush the vital floods,  
And stain his fainting limbs. Nor yet with pain  
His brow is clouded, but those beauteous wounds,  
The sacred pledges of his own renown, 705  
And Sparta's safety, with sereneest joy  
His closing eye contemplates. Fame can twine  
No brighter laurels round his glorious head,  
His virtue more to labour Fate forbids,  
And lays him now in honourable rest 710  
To seal his country's liberty in death.

2 AP 57

*End of the Ninth and Last Book.*

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es 700

pain  
ounds,  
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vine  
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